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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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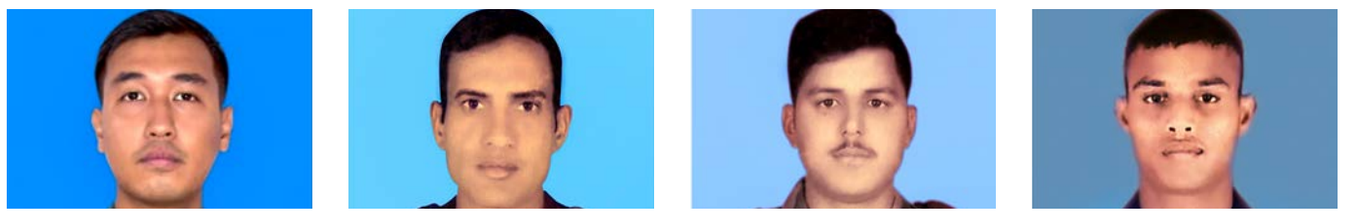
Terrorists kill 4 jawans in J&K, 9th attack since polls

70, including 52 jawans, have died in J&K terror attacks



Captain Brijesh Thapa, Sepoy Bijendra, Sepoy Ajay Kumar Singh and NK (OFC) Dokkari Rajesh were killed in the encounter between security forces and terrorists in Jammu's Doda, on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

JAMMU, 16 JULY

Four Army personnel, including a captain, were killed in a fierce gunfight with heavily armed terrorists of Pakistan-based Kashmir Tigers, a JeM shadow group, in Doda district.

This was the ninth terror attacks after Lok Sabha election result and the third major terror incident in Jammu region in three weeks.

The attack on Monday night, which came a week after terrorists ambushed an Army patrol vehicle in Kathua district killing five soldiers and injuring as many, has sparked widespread condemnation and protests in Jammu and other regions.

Captain Brijesh Thapa from Darjeeling, Naik Dokkari Rajesh from Andhra Pradesh, and Sepoys Bijendra and Ajay Kumar Singh from Rajasthan suffered fatal injuries in the gunfight in the Desa forest area.

Following the encounter, security forces launched an extensive operation in the Desa forest belt to flush out terrorists in the upper reaches of Udhampur, Doda and Kishtwar districts in Jammu region and thereafter to Kashmir.

has claimed responsibility for the latest attack.

The Army, along with para-commandos and aerial support from drones and helicopters, is intensifying its search operation to eliminate the terrorists. Army said the gunfight erupted late Monday evening in the Desa forest area, . Jammu region has witnessed a surge in terrorist activities since 2021. Over 70 people, including 52 security personnel have lost their lives in these attacks. *—PTI*

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Khedkar called back, IAS training put on hold

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday put on hold the `district training programme' of controversial IAS officer Puja Khedkar as she was summoned back to the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration for "necessary action". While Khedkar, whose disability as well as OBC certificates are under the scanner, maintained that she was a victim of misinformation and "fake news", Pune Police said they would check the authenticity of the disability certificates she had submitted to the UPSC.

A letter by Maharashtra additional chief secretary Nitin Gadre said the Lal Bahadur Shastri academy had decided to put her training programme on hold, and recall her. *—PTI*

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Market closes at fresh record highs

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

Continuing the record-breaking run for the third straight day, benchmark Sensex and Nifty closed at record high levels on Tuesday following buying in FMCG, telecom and select IT shares and FII inflows. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 51.69 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a new lifetime high of 80,716.55. During the day, it advanced 233.44 points or 0.28 per cent to hit a fresh record high of 80,898.30. The NSE Nifty rose by 26.30 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 24,613. *—PTI*

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Violence over job quota protests kills 5 in Bangladesh

DHAKA, 16 JULY

At least five people, including three students, were killed and more than 100 others injured on Tuesday as protesters demanding reforms of the quota system in government jobs clashed with police in major cities in Bangladesh. The authorities on Tuesday called out the paramilitary Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) troops in four major cities after hundreds of policemen in riot gear overnight fanned out in public university campuses across the country. The clashes erupted on Monday as activists of the ruling Awami League's student front confronted the protestors who insist the existing quota system was largely debarring the enrolment of meritorious students in government services. *—PTI*

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Cong to boycott Rahul Kanwal's TV debate show

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Miffed by BJP leader Amit Malviya's comments on assassination of former prime ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, Congress on Tuesday decided to boycott journalist Rahul Kanwal's debate show on India Today news channel. Malviya Reportedly said the assassination of both Gandhis in 1984 and 1991 were because of political decisions they took. Congress publicity cell chief Pawan Khera slammed the news channel for allowing such comments go unchallenged. In 1984, Indira Gandhi was shot dead by her Sikh bodyguards following the orders to the Army to storm the Golden Temple to remove Sikh separatist leader Jarnail Bhindranwale. *—Salar News*

Landslide kills 3 in K'taka; 4 missing

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Three people were killed and four are feared dead after a landslide near Shirur village on National Highway 66 in Uttara Kannada district on Tuesday.

Parts of a hill collapsed on a roadside eatery on the highway, police sources said. Drivers of three gas tankers had stopped by the eatery for a tea break when mud and rocks plunged down the hill, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda told Legislative Assembly. The landslide, triggered by incessant rains, also swept away two of the three tankers into Gangavali river flowing on the other side of the road.

"Four members of a family who ran a 'Dhaba' and three drivers might have died. The body of a woman has been found floating in the river. Since the loaded gas tankers in the river can be dangerous, people from the BPCL and HPCL are attending to it," the Revenue Minister said.

The landslide also swept away two of the three tankers into Gangavali River **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

Uttara Kannada DC K Lakshmi Priya has asked people not to consume water from River Gangavali directly as the gas tankers have flown into the river after the landslide.

A police officer said: "We have recovered three bodies so far including that of 47-year-old Lakshman Naik and his 36-year-old wife Shanti Naik who were running an eatery on the National Highway 66." The others who are feared dead are Roshan, 11, Avantika, 6, and Jagannath, 55. The minister alleged that the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), while building National Highway 66, "cut the hill steep instead of a 45-degree slope resulting in the accident." He said the State would have a meeting with NHAI . Speaker UT Khader said the highway authority should be held accountable and a case could be filed. *—Salar News*

SC ATTAINS FULL STRENGTH WITH 2 NEW JUDGES

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Supreme Court is all set to attain its full strength with the elevation of Justices N Kotiswar Singh and R Mahadevan.

The apex court has a sanctioned strength of 34 judges, including the chief justice, and was functioning with 32 judges. CJI DY Chandrachud is likely to administer the oath of office to the two judges on Thursday. Supreme Court will function with 34 judges until Justice Hima Kohli retires on 1 September, 2024, followed by CJI Chandrachud, who superannuates on November 10 this year. On 11 July, the collegium had recommended to the Centre the names of Singh and Mahadevan for elevation to the apex court. *—PTI*

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IN PRIVATE FIRM

Bill to mandate 100% job quota for Kannadigas

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Karnataka Cabinet has approved a bill mandating 100 per cent reservation for Kannadigas in private firms for Group C and Group D posts, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Tuesday.

He said the decision was taken in the cabinet meeting held on Monday.

He said it was his government's wish that Kannadigas be given an opportunity to lead a comfortable life in their state and not be deprived of jobs in 'Kannada land'.

"We are a pro-Kannada government. Our priority is to look after the welfare of Kannadigas," the he said.

According to sources in the law department, the bill will be tabled on Thursday in the Assembly.

PHOTO: PTI

- Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar tabled 33 projects totalling a budget outlay of Rs 1,790 crore for the Brand Bengaluru initiative in State Assembly on Tuesday.

Brand Bengaluru sees 6 new infra projects

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar tabled 33 projects totalling a budget outlay of Rs 1,790 crore for the Brand Bengaluru initiative in State Assembly on Tuesday. Of the 33 projects planned for infrastructure development, six are new proposals.

The first of the six new projects comes under Suguma Sanchar (Free Movement) Bengaluru. In this, Rs 200 crore has been budgeted for Urban Tunnel projects to alleviate traffic congestion in the City. Under Education Bengaluru, Rs 50 crore was announced for enhancing facilities in government schools. A total of 120 crore was allotted for Green Bengaluru and it will be used for installing percolation tanks to address water scarcity and other environmental initiatives. Under Healthy Bengaluru initiative, Rs 275 crore was allotted for high-tech maternity homes, emergency health care centres and war rooms. Two new projects were introduced under Clean Bengaluru: Rs 100 crore for acquiring landfill sites and solid waste management equipment.

Salary, pension of govt workers to go up by 58%

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said the salary and pension of the State government employees will increase by 58.5 per cent to the basic pay as of 1 July, 2024 as recommended by the Seventh Pay Commission.

The revision of salary and pension will come into effect from 1 August this year and will see a 32 per cent increase in the house rent allowance.

The Seventh Pay Commission, headed by former chief secretary K Sudhakar Rao, on Monday recommended a 27.5 percent hike on basic salary of government employees.

This salary revision will incur an additional expenditure of Rs 20,208 crore per annum and necessary budgetary provisions have been made in the budget of 2024-25, he said. *—Salar News*

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TN to knock on SC's door over Cauvery water row

CHENNAI, 16 JULY

A meeting of the legislative party leaders in the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Tuesday decided to approach the Supreme Court, if necessary, to get Cauvery water for the state from Karnataka and Chief Minister MK Stalin vowed to take all necessary steps and protect the interests of farmers.

Addressing an all-party meeting at the Secretariat, Stalin assured that the state government would uphold the rights of farmers of the Cauvery delta region.

The government said on 15 July that the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) had directed the release of one TMC ft everyday from 12 July, 2024 to 31 July, 2024.

Karnataka had said that it is ready to release 8,000 cusecs of water and not one TMC ft (11,500 cusecs).

Siddaramaiah deplored that Karnataka does not even release a decreased quantum of water stipulated by CWRC. He said since the Karnataka government did not release Cauvery water last year in compliance with a verdict of the Supreme Court, farmers were severely affected. *—PTI*

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IN A SETBACK

HC GRANTS BAIL TO 3 ACCUSED IN GAURI LANKESH MURDER CASE

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Karnataka High Court on Tuesday granted bail to three people accused in the murder of activist-journalist Gauri Lankesh, who was shot dead in 2017. Justice S Vishwajith Shetty of the Kalaburagi bench granted bail to Amit Digvekar, KT Naveen Kumar and HL Suresh.

Justice Shetty had reserved orders on the three bail applications on 2 July.

All three accused applied for bail citing the case of co-accused Mohan Nayak, who was granted bail by the High Court in December 2023 on the ground of delay in trial.

Nayak had sought bail on the ground of delay in conclusion of the trial and highlighted that there were a total of 527 chargesheet witnesses in the case, but only 90 had been examined at the time.

The State, however, opposed their bail pleas, citing an order of the Dharawad bench of the high Court that had rejected the bail applications of those accused in the killing of scholar and activist MM Kalaburagi.

Lankesh was shot dead by two motorcycle-borne assassins outside her home in West Bengaluru on the night of 5 September, 2017. *—Courtesy, Bar & Bench*

DENGUE CASES IN K'TAKA CROSSES 10,000 MARK

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Dengue cases in Karnataka have crossed the 10,000 mark so far this year, said the State Health Department on Tuesday. In the last 24 hours, 487 positive cases of dengue have been reported in the State, taking the figures to 10,449 since January till date. Out of the 10,449 cases, 358 are active cases (hospitalised) and the total fatalities due to dengue stands at eight. Of the positive cases, 3,770 were reported from BBMP jurisdiction, followed by Chikkamagaluru (621) and Mysuru (562). *—PTI*

FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

Verify ration cards in 4 weeks: SC to states

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Supreme Court on Tuesday rapped defaulter states for the delay in verification of migrant labourers registered on the e-shram portal for issuance of ration cards and directed them to complete the exercise within four weeks.

The top court also directed the Centre to release food grains to those states which have completed the verification of migrant labourers.

Terming the delay as "unfortunate", a bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Ahsanuddin Amanullah said if the states fail to complete the verification process within the stipulated time it will summon the secretaries concerned.

The Court directed the Centre to release food grains to those states which have completed the verification of migrant labourers **PHOTO: PTI**

The top court noted that Bihar and Telangana were the only states have completed 100 per cent verification of migrant labourers.

During the hearing, advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioners, submitted that while some states have completed the process of verification, others have not even started the exercise.

The top court has posted the matter for hearing on August 27.

The apex court had earlier directed all the states and Union territories to provide within two months ration cards to approximately 8 crore migrant labourers registered on the e-shram portal for availing benefits of various schemes of the government.

The apex court had said unnecessary delays were being caused by putting in impediments such as requiring eKYC of all ration card-holders to be updated before the direction could be compiled with. *—PTI*

2 NEET accused held for stealing paper from NTA

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The CBI has arrested two persons including a key accused in the NEET-UG paper leak case who allegedly stole the paper from a National Testing Agency's trunk in Hazaribagh in Jharkhand, officials said Tuesday.

With the two arrests, the total number of persons arrested in connection with cases pertaining to leakage, impersonation and other irregularities in the medical entrance exam has now reached 14, they said.

The agency has arrested Pankaj Kumar alias Aditya from Patna, a 2017-batch civil engineer from the National Institute of Technology Jamshedpur, who allegedly stole the NEET-UG paper from the NTA trunk. CBI has also arrested one Raju Singh who allegedly helped Kumar in stealing the paper and passing them on to other gang members, they said. The agency, which is probing the alleged irregularities in the medical entrance exam, has registered six FIRs. The FIR from Bihar pertains to leakage of paper while the remaining from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra are linked to impersonation of candidates and cheating. *—PTI*

BJP demands CM's resignation in Assembly over Valmiki and MUDA irregularities

BJP says govt is diverting SC/ST funds for the enjoyment of few people; blames Cong for official's suicide

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

The alleged financial irregularities in a State-run corporation continued to create uproar in the Legislative Assembly for the second consecutive day on Tuesday, with Leader of Opposition R Ashoka demanding Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's resignation.

The BJP leader said he held Congress accountable for the "loot" at the Corporation.

He also said the government was responsible for the suicide of the corporation's official -- which led to the alleged scam being exposed -- and questioned the fairness of the state government constituted Special Investigation Team's (SIT) probe into it.

"The Schedule Tribes community had to get Rs 187 crore but the funds were diverted to Telangana. Who will give (back) money?

"Siddaramaiah has to give the amount to ST community beneficiaries who were waiting for it. The money that was kept for the welfare of the ST community has gone for the enjoyment of some people," Ashoka said. He said the money kept for the welfare of ST community was "looted".

"There should be a thorough probe by the CBI and ED into this financial irregularity. Ashoka also hit out at government over the SIT probe, questioning why, despite 40 days since the scam to light, the investigation team had not issued notice to Nagendra and ruling Congress MLA Basanagouda Daddal, who is the chairman of the corporation. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar lashed out at former deputy chief minister of BJP, CN Ashwath Narayan, referring to him in singular terms as the "father of looters."

The confrontation occurred after Narayan accused Siddaramaiah of abstaining from the debate following his alleged involvement in the "daylight robbery" in Valmiki Corporation.

Leader of Opposition BY Vijayendra highlighted the shortfall in the release of grants from the government for the implementation of various schemes under the Welfare Department of Backward Classes for the year 2023-24. *—PTI*

State to introduce bill on borewells

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

State government is set to introduce a bill this week to tackle the issue of unregulated borewells and pump sets threatening irrigation projects. The bill will ban installation of pump sets within 1km of canals. MLA Jagadish Gudaganti said that water from Thungala-Savalagi lift irrigation project was not reaching beneficiaries.

BJP and JD(S) MLCs protest against the State government on MUDA, Valmiki Board and other issues during Council Session at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar makes a point during Assembly session, at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

If my son has done wrong, let him be hanged, says Revanna

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Senior JD(S) MLA HD Revanna on Tuesday told the Legislative Assembly that his son and former MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of sexually abusing several women, should be hanged if he has committed wrongs.The emotional former minister also targeted the Director-General (DG) of Police Alok Mohan, calling him "unfit" to be a top cop. He said, "I have not come here to defend things or to have a discussion. I have been a lawmaker for 25 years. I have spent 40 years in political life. Against me, some woman is brought to the Director-General's office and the DG gets the complaint filed. He is 'nalayak' to be the DG. He is unfit to be DG. *—PTI*

Bengaluru to have 2nd Int'l airport by 2035

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

SInfrastructure Minister MB Patil on Tuesday said the State government wants the second international airport for Bengaluru by 2035 when the existing Kempegowda International Airport in North Bengaluru will touch its peak in terms of number of passengers and cargo freight. *—PTI*

Bengaluru's sky deck project awaits NOC order, says Shivakumar

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

The Bengaluru's sky deck projects which is also going to be India's tallest sky deck project under Brand Bengaluru awaits 'No Objection Certificate' (NOC) from HAL and defence. During Legislative Assembly Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said, "The sky deck projects with Rs 50 crore tender of detailed projects Reports has been approved. Letter of intent has been issued. Currently, we are waiting for the NOC after which we will kick start the project." Shivakumar said, "A detailed report of the project of Rs 50 crore tender has been approved. Letter of intent has been issued." Shivakumar said the deck can be also used for parking, museums, restaurants, commercial establishments. BBMP officials have identified two potential locations for the sky deck—NGEF Byappanahalli and Soap Factory in Yeshwanthpur. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: X

Veteran Kannada theatre artiste Sadananda dies

MANGALURU, 16 JULY

Veteran Kannada theatre and film personality Sadananda Suvarna died on Tuesday at the age of 92 due to age-related illness, family sources said. Suvarna, who wrote and directed hundreds of successful plays on the Kannada Tulu stage, produced movies like 'Ghatashraddha', 'Kubi' and 'Iyala' and serials like 'Gudde Bhuta'. He was very active in Mumbai theatre as an actor, dramatist, and experimental director. He joined Mangaluru theatre at a young age and left the golden mark of his creative talent here. He directed plays such as 'Urulu', 'Court Martial', 'Maley nintha mele' and others. *—PTI*

10 criminals arrested in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

The City police have arrested 10 people in separate cases including illegal activities, car theft, house burglary, and drug peddling. City Police Commissioner B Dayananda said the Crime Squad in Western Division, held two interstate thieves involved in selling stolen cars with fake No Objection Certificates (NOCs). The duo stole cars from different states, re-registered them with fake documents, and sold them. The police have seized 17 cars.*—Salar News*

Byju's fails to pay ₹158.9 cr to BCCI; faces insolvency

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Edtech company Byju's, which was once India's most valuable start-up worth an estimated $ 22 billion, will face insolvency proceedings for failure to pay Rs 158.9 crore to cricket board Board of Control for Cricket in India. The Bengaluru bench of the National Company Law Tribunal on Tuesday allowed bankruptcy proceedings against the firm and appointed an interim resolution professional, suspending the company's board of directors and freezing its assets.*—PTI*

DKS appeals to TN to cooperate on Mekedatu project

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister Shivakumar has called on Tamil Nadu to cooperate with the Mekedatu project, highlighting its benefits to both states, especially Tamil Nadu.

"The balancing reservoir at Mekedatu will assist Tamil Nadu more significantly than Karnataka. The water stored there ensures timely releases to Tamil Nadu. Residents of Bengaluru, including Kannadigas, Tamilians, and Andhrites, will gain from the drinking water provided by this project. I appeal for their cooperation," he stated during a press conference at Vidhana Soudha. He expressed openness to dialogue and cooperation, emphasising the need for mutual understanding.

"Tamil Nadu have every right to meet as we meet. We don't object to their meeting. It is their duty," Shivakumar stated, addressing the ongoing discussions on water allocations. He refrained from direct comments on Tamil Nadu's recent actions but highlighted positive developments in water inflow in the Cauvery region.

"One thing I would like to appeal to Tamil Nadu, for your interest and our interest. More than our interest it is your interest, this Mekedatu reservoir, you just permit us, whatever storage we will do, we will give you that water," Shivakumar said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said: "It is my humble appeal on behalf of the people of Karnataka, where all selections -- Tamilians, Kannadigs, Andhraits and people from North India -- are there. Please permit us for Makedatu, don't object, we will cooperate in whatever way we can."

Shivakumar informed that 1.5 Thousand Million Cubic Feet (TMCFT) of water is flowing to Biligundlu in Tamil Nadu daily, with increase in the inflow into the four major reservoirs in the Cauvery river basin in his State, following good rains in the catchment areas.

Also the Water Resources Minister, he said: "If things continue this way the problem in releasing water to Tamil Nadu may probably get sorted out." "The inflow into Harangi is 12,827 cusecs, Hemavati is 14,027 cusecs, to KRS 25,933 cusecs, and to Kabini it is 22,840 cusecs," Shivakumar said. *—Salar News with Agencies*

- He refrained from direct comments on Tamil Nadu's recent actions but highlighted positive developments in water inflow in the Cauvery region

TN farmers, Left parties protest demanding release of water

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Scores of farmers besides members of the Left parties staged a rail-roko agitation at Thiruthuraipoondi in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvarur district on Tuesday demanding that neighbouring Karnataka release Cauvery water and help sustain agriculture in the state. vThe protest was also to urge the Centre to intervene into this matter. A protest was also held in front of Karnataka Bank in Tiruchirappalli demanding Karnataka to immediately release water. Workers of CPI and CPI(M) who held a rail-roko agitation condemning the Karnataka government for not releasing water to the State. *—PTI*

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar informs that 1.5 thousand million cubic feet of water is flowing to Biligundlu in Tamil Nadu daily **PHOTO: PTI**

CM must talk to tribunal more effectively, says BJP

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

Karnataka BJP President BY Vijayendra said that they have urged the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to represent more effectively before the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal in Delhi whenever the meeting is called.

"As far as the Tamil Nadu government is concerned, we are not bothered about what they will discuss but we have urged the CM to represent before the tribunal more effectively in Delhi whenever the meeting is called...," Vijayendra said speaking to ANI on Tuesday.

Vijayendra said that in the last monsoon season, Karnataka had released more water than expected and BJP has already informed the Chief Minister not to compromise on farmers' interest in the State.

Slamming Congress, the senior BJP leader said that the Yediyurappa government had released more funds for backward communities than the Siddaramaiah government. "Congress has done grave injustice," Vijayendra said. *—ANI*

GOVT WORKING TO IMPLEMENT FAME III SOON, SAYS HDK

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

The government is working on the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) III scheme for promotion of electric mobility and it is likely to be implemented in the near future, Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy said on Tuesday.

The third phase of FAME scheme will, however, not be featured in the upcoming Union Budget, the Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel told reporters here on the sidelines of an event organised by auto industry body SIAM.

Earlier this year, the Heavy Industries Ministry had announced that subsidies under the second phase of FAME scheme would be eligible for e-vehicles sold till 31 March, 2024 or till the time funds are available, whichever is earlier while also enhancing outlay of the programme from Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 11,500 crore.

To a query on whether American electric carmaker Tesla has communicated to the government about its intention to invest in India under the new EV policy, he said nothing has been discussed yet. *—PTI*

4K FAMILIES TO BE COVERED

K'taka launches programme to empower vulnerable, poor

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

State government on Tuesday launched the Karnataka Inclusive Livelihood Programme (KILP) as part of its effort to enhance livelihoods and empower vulnerable sections, officials said.

This programme of the Department of Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood will initially cover 20 taluks of 10 districts in the state, they said.

Launching the pilot phase of the programme that initially aims to cover 4,000 households with a budget of Rs 23 crore, Livelihood Minister Sharan Prakash Patil said that the KILP was aimed at creating sustainable, gender-equitable and climate-resilient livelihoods for extremely poor households across 20 taluks of the 10 districts in the state that rank 'poor' in the Human Development Index.

It will target the most vulnerable groups, particularly winstilling self-confidence, imparting skill training, enhancing livelihoods, fostering social inclusion, and promoting economic prosperity through a capability-building approach, he said.

Uma Mahadevan said that the scheme will expand its reach to 50,000 extremely poor households by 2027 and 2,50,000 households by 2029.

The KILP is designed to address poverty, inequalities, regional disparities and livelihood issues. Sustainable livelihoods, food and nutritional security, income enhancement, access to government welfare schemes, gender equity, women, and social empowerment are among KILP's key objectives.

The 20 taluks covered in the pilot phase include Hungund and Badami in Bagalkot district, Aurad and Kamalanagar in Bidar, Kalagi and Shahabad in Kalaburagi, Maski and Sirwar in Raichur, Vadagera and Gurmitkal in Yadgir, Kanakagiri and Gangavathi in Koppal, Thalikote and Almel in Vijayapura, Kudligi and Harapanahalli in Vijayanagara, Kampli and Kurugodu in Ballari and Gundlupet and Yelandur in Chamarajanagara, the statement added. *—PTI*

Rs 23 crore is the estimated budget for the pilot phase of the programme **PHOTO: PTI**

POLICE STARTS LANE DISCIPLINE CAMPAIGN IN CITY

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

City Traffic Police on Tuesday launched a lane discipline campaign on Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) Road to reduce congestion and prevent accidents.

According to the officials, drivers of all vehicles on KIA road (BB road - NH-44) under the Bengaluru City Police must drive in the designated lane and violators will be fined.

The traffic police officials said Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) must use the extreme left lane. Fast-moving vehicles must use the middle lane and overtaking is only permitted on the extreme right lane.

"This initiative aims to reduce congestion and accidents, enhance traffic flow and efficiency and ensure safety for all road users. We urge all road users to cooperate and follow these guidelines to make our roads safer and more efficient," said MN Anucheth, Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic), Bengaluru City. *—Salar News with Agencies*

State extends 'anywhere registration' to all dists

BENGALURU, 16 JULY

To make the Registration Department more citizen-friendly, Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda on Tuesday instructed its officials to expand the 'Anywhere Registration' system -- which was initially limited to Bengaluru -- to all districts starting from August.

Under this scheme, citizens could register their property documents at any sub-registrar office within the jurisdiction of the district registration office of Bengaluru.

Under the 'Anywhere Registration' system, any individual can register their property documents at any sub-registrar office that is less crowded, within the district, officials said.

The 'Anywhere Registration' system was introduced on a pilot basis in Belagavi and Tumakuru districts on 14 March.

The plan is to introduce this system in four districts each in August and September, and then increase the number to eight in the subsequent months. By the end of this year, the service should be available in all districts, he added.

The system was implemented to prevent delays in document registration, simplify the registration process, relieve citizens from waiting at sub-registrar offices, and reduce the workload on office staff.

Initially, the system was introduced in sub-registrar offices within the jurisdiction of Gandhinagar, Basavanagudi, Jayanagar, Shivajinagar, and Rajajinagar district registration offices in Bengaluru. The 'Anywhere Registration' system has been implemented successfully in Bengaluru City district, providing quick services to the public in matters of registration. *—PTI*

Krishna Byre Gowda **PHOTO: PTI**

Oppn says BJP's policies are killing jawans

Defence Minister Rajnath says counter terrorist ops are underway & will restore peace

The mortal remains of 4 Army personnel who were killed in an encounter with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda, on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Congress on Tuesday attacked the Centre after four soldiers were killed in an encounter in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda, with Rahul Gandhi asserting that government should take full responsibility for the security lapses and take strict action against the culprits.

Rahul Gandhi also said such horrific incidents one after the other are extremely sad and worrying, and that Army soldiers and their families are bearing the brunt of "BJP's wrong policies".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said he was deeply distressed by the martyrdom of the four brave soldiers, including an officer.

"Our heart goes out to the families of our bravehearts, who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of Bharat Mata. Our thoughts and prayers are with the injured, and we wish him a speedy and complete recovery," he said.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma asserted that India would give a befitting reply to Pakistan-sponsored terrorism.

Hitting out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi accused NDA regime of completely "failing" in not being able to control terrorism

"Sad to know that Brijesh Thapa, a young Army officer from Darjeeling, sacrificed his life in the line of duty in Jammu and Kashmir," West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said.

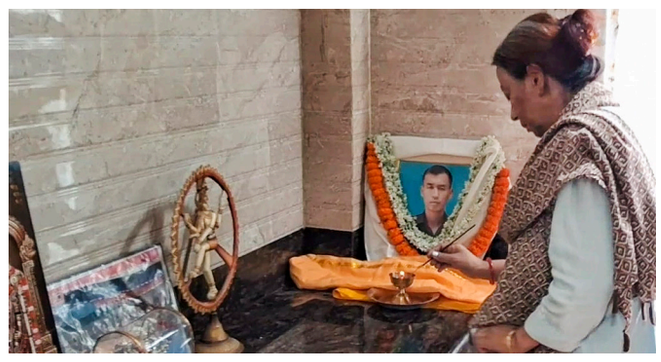
PDP president Mehbooba Mufti sought accountability for "loss of 50 soldiers in past 32 months" in terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, saying "heads should have rolled by now". *—PTI*

Terror strikes in Jammu this year

12 security personnel, 10 civilians and 5 terrorists have died since 1 January in terror attacks in Jammu region. 55 people were injured during the period.

FOLLOWING IS A TIMELINE OF TERROR INCIDENTS IN THE REGION

- **15 JULY:** 4 army personnel killed in a gunfight with terrorists in Doda
- **8 JULY:** 5 army personnel killed in a terrorist ambush in Kathua
- **7 JULY:** An army personnel injured in terrorist attack in Rajouri
- **26 JUNE:** 3 foreign terrorists killed in a gunfight in Doda
- **12 JUNE:** A policeman injured in a terrorist attack in Doda.
- **11 & 12 JUNE:** 2 foreign terrorists and a CRPF jawan killed in a gunfight in Kathua
- **9 JUNE:** 9 pilgrims killed and 42 injured in a terrorist attack in Reasi
- **4 MAY:** 1 IAF personnel killed in a terrorist attack in Poonch
- **28 APRIL:** A village defence guard killed in an encounter with terrorists in Udhampur
- **22 APRIL:** A government employee shot dead by terrorists in Rajouri



Mother of martyred Army captain Brijesh Thapa pays last respect to his picture, in Siliguri, on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said he is "deeply saddened" by the death of four Army soldiers in an anti-terror operation in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district and asserted that the security forces are committed to eliminate the scourge of terrorism in the region.

Chief of Army Staff Gen Upendra Dwivedi briefed Singh on the ongoing operation.

Four army personnel, including an officer, have been killed in action during the operation against a heavily-armed group of terrorists.

"Deeply saddened by the loss of our brave and courageous Indian Army Soldiers in a counter terrorist operation in Urrar Baggi, Doda (J&K)," Singh said on X.

"My heart goes out to the bereaved families. The Nation stands firmly with the families of our soldiers who have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty," he said.

The defence minister said the counter terrorist operations are underway, and "our soldiers remain committed to eliminate the scourge of terrorism and restore peace and order in the region."

The defence minister's office said he spoke to Gen Dwivedi this morning.

"Raksha Mantri Shri @ rajnathsingh spoke to CoAs, General Upendra Dwivedi this morning. RM was apprised of the ground situation and the ongoing Counter Terrorist Op in Doda by the Army Chief," Singh's office said on X. *—PTI*

PM Modi likely to address UNGA session on 26 Sept

UNITED NATIONS, 16 JULY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to address the high-level UN General Assembly session on 26 September, according to a provisional list of speakers issued by the UN. The high-level General Debate of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly will take place from 24-30 September. As per the provisional list of speakers for the General Debate issued by the UN, India's "Head of Government" is scheduled to address the high-level session in the afternoon of 26 September. The list is not final and the UN releases updated provisional lists of speakers in the weeks leading up to the high-level session to reflect any modifications in attendance, schedules and speaking slots of leaders, ministers and ambassadors. *—PTI*

SC seeks replies from CBI, ED on Sisodia's bail pleas

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought responses from the CBI and ED on AAP leader Manish Sisodia's pleas seeking bail in the corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. Sisodia has sought bail contending that he has been in custody for 16 months and the trial against him was at the same stage as it was in October last year. A bench headed by Justice BR Gavai agreed to hear the pleas filed by Sisodia who has also filed an application seeking revival of his bail petitions in the excise policy-linked corruption and money laundering cases. "Issue notice, returnable on 29 July," said the bench. Advocate Vivek Jain, appearing for Sisodia, told the bench that AAP leader has been in custody for 16 months. "I (Sisodia) have been inside for 16 months. I had come in October. This court said that if it remains at a snail's pace, I can re-apply," he said. The matter relates to alleged corruption and money laundering of the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22. *—PTI*

Govt convenes all-party meet on 21 July, TMC to skip

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The government has convened an all-party meeting on 21 July at 11 am ahead of the Monsoon Session of Parliament which will start next Monday, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, said in a statement. This will be Leader of Opposition and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi's first time at the customary session-eve meeting of floor leaders from all parties if he attends it. Trinamool Congress (TMC) said no representatives from the party will attend the meeting as 21 July is observed by the party as Martyrs' Day. The Monsoon Session of Parliament is scheduled to begin on 22 July and will conclude on 12 August. *—PTI*

IMF raises GDP forecast to 7%, yet sees tepid growth

WASHINGTON, 16 JULY

The International Monetary Fund is upgrading its economic outlook this year for China, India and Europe while modestly lowering expectations for the United States and Japan. But it says worldwide progress against accelerating prices has been slowed by stickier-than-expected inflation for services, from airline travel to restaurant meals. Overall, the IMF said Tuesday that it still expects the world economy to grow a lackluster 3.2 per cent this year, unchanged from its previous forecast in April and down a tick from 3.3 per cent growth in 2023. From 2000 through 2019, before the pandemic upended economic activity, global growth had averaged 3.8 per cent a year. IMF works to promote economic growth and financial stability and reduce global poverty. *—PTI*

NTK leader hacked to death in Madurai, four arrested

CHENNAI, 16 JULY

A senior functionary of Naam Tamilar Katchi was hacked to death by an unidentified gang in Tamil Nadu's Madurai on Tuesday, and four people were arrested in connection with the murder, police said.

The arrest was made by the Tallakulam police hours after his murder over a property dispute among the family, they said.

The functionary C Balasubramanian - was on a morning walk when he was chased and killed, a police official said.

The assailants inflicted fatal injuries on the NTK leader before making good their escape. Balasubramanian was rushed to a nearby private hospital but was declared "brought dead," said police.

C Balasubramanian *PHOTO: PTI*

The killing of Balasubramanian, who is Madurai district deputy secretary of the Tamil nationalist party - Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK), comes days after the murder of Bahujan Samaj Party state Chief K Armstrong in Chennai.

Police, however, ruled out any political motive in Balasubramanian's killing. The party's chief coordinator Seeman condemned the killing and urged the police to arrest culprits immediately.

"We will launch a protest if those responsible for the death of Balasubramanian are not arrested immediately," Seeman said in a post on 'X' tagging Chief Minister MK Stalin @mkstalin and @CMOTamilnadu. *—PTI*

INDIA ally Sahani's father stabbed to death

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

In a ghastly incident that has sent shock waves across Bihar, former state minister, INDIA ally Mukesh Sahni's father, 70, was found stabbed to death at his native home in Darbhanga district, a police officer said.

According to Jitendra Singh Gangwar, ADG, two people have been taken into custody for questioning, on the basis of CCTV footage.

"They were found moving in a suspicious manner. However, the case is being investigated from all possible angles," said Gangwar, who did not divulge the identity of the detainees. He added, "An STF team has been sent to Darbhanga to assist local police probe."

Jitan Sahni *PHOTO: ANI*

The ADG said the body, which had deep wounds caused by a sharp-edged object on the chest and abdomen, has been sent for post mortem.

Meanwhile, a political blame game has followed the tragedy aligned with parties on both sides. *—PTI*

Chargesheet filed against Bibhav in Maliwal case

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Delhi Police on Tuesday filed its 500-odd page chargesheet against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar in the alleged assault of AAP MP Swati Maliwal.

The chargesheet was filed before Metropolitan Magistrate Gaurav Goyal who also extended the judicial custody of Kumar till 30 July.

Kumar is accused of assaulting AAP Rajya Sabha MP Maliwal on 13 May at the chief minister's official residence.

During the Tuesday's proceedings, the prosecution told the court that the chargesheet runs into around 500 pages and it also has the statements of about 50 witnesses. *—PTI*

Calcutta HC restrains Mamata from making defamatory statements against Governor

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Calcutta High Court on Tuesday restrained West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and three others from making any defamatory or incorrect statement against Governor CV Ananda Bose.

In an interim order, Justice Krishna Rao said the matter will be heard again on 14 August.

Bose had filed a defamation suit against Banerjee, two newly-elected TMC MLAs Sayantika Banerjee and Reyat Hossain Sarkar and party leader Kunal Ghosh.

Governor CV Ananda Bose and WB CM Mamata Banerjee *PHOTO: PTI*

Speaking on an imbroglio over oath-taking of the two new MLAs, Banerjee had made certain comments, over which the governor moved the defamation suit. He also prayed for an interim order restraining them from making any further comment in connection with alleged incidents at Raj Bhavan.

Banerjee's lawyer Sanjay Basu said in a statement that the order of the court will be challenged before a higher bench.

Hearing for the prayer for interim order was concluded on Monday and the order was reserved by the court.

The governor being a Constitutional Authority "cannot meet the personal attacks being made by the defendants against him by taking the benefit of social media platform.

A row had triggered over the venue of the swearing-in ceremony of two newly elected TMC MLAs last month, as they wanted to be taken oath in the assembly, while the governor was in favour of holding it in Raj Bhavan. *—PTI*

BJP won't allow OBC quota for Muslims in Haryana: Shah

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday accused the Congress of being anti-backward classes and said if the party comes to power in Haryana, it will give reservations to the Muslims.

Addressing a 'Backward Classes Samman Sammelan' here, Shah referred to the Kaka Kalekar Commission formed in the 1950s to provide reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and said the Congress did not implement its recommendations for years.

"In 1980, (the then prime minister) Indira Gandhi put the Mandal Commission in cold storage. In 1990, when it was accepted, Rajiv Gandhi gave a two-and-a-half-hour speech and opposed OBC reservation," the Union minister said.

"I want to assure you that we will not allow Muslim reservation in Haryana," he said.

Shah said the Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini-led government recently increased the annual income limit for the creamy layer of OBCs from Rs 6 lakh to Rs 8 lakh.

Announcing the decision on 24 June, Saini had said that it would provide "significant benefits" in employment for the OBC category. *—PTI*

US urges India to 'utilise' ties with Russia

MILWAUKEE, 16 JULY

Observing that India has a longstanding relationship with Russia, the US has said that it has encouraged New Delhi to "utilise" that relationship with Moscow and urge President Vladimir Putin to end the "illegal war" against Ukraine.

These remarks were made by State Department Spokesperson Mathew Miller at his daily news conference on Monday.

Miller made similar remarks on 9 July soon after Prime Minister Modi left Russia.

Modi was in Russia for two days from 8-9 July for the 22nd India-Russia annual summit that has been watched closely by the West amidst the raging Ukraine conflict.

India has been stoutly defending its "special and privileged strategic partnership" with Russia and maintained the momentum in the ties notwithstanding the Ukraine conflict.

India has not yet condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and has consistently pitched for a resolution. *—PTI*

AATMANIRBHARTA

MoD to procure 346 defence items

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

India on Tuesday announced a fresh list of 346 military hardware, including "strategically-important" systems and weapons that will only be procured from state-run domestic manufacturers after a ban on their import kicks in under a staggered time-line.

The defence ministry said over 12,300 items have already been indigenised in last three years as part of efforts to boost domestic defence industries.

The fifth positive indigenisation list comprising 346 items has been notified and the items will be produced by the defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs), the ministry said.

The ministry said four PILs comprising 4,666 items were notified by the department of defence production earlier for the DPSUs, of which 2,972, having import substitution value worth Rs 3,400 crore, have already been indigenised.

These five lists for DPSUs are in addition to the five positive indigenisation lists of 509 items notified by the department of military affairs.

In the last few years, the government has taken a series of measures to promote domestic defence production.

According to estimates, the Indian armed forces are projected to spend around USD 130 billion. *—PTI*

EAM REAFFIRMS SUPPORT TO MAURITIUS

PORT LOUIS, 16 JULY

India on Tuesday reaffirmed its support to Mauritius on the issue of the Chagos Archipelago, a gesture which was swiftly appreciated by the island nation in Indian Ocean.

India's explicit public support regarding the Chagos Archipelago was conveyed by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who is here for a two-day visit for engagements with the leadership of Mauritius to cement the bilateral ties that are critical for the future of the Indian Ocean region.

Perhaps driven by a common colonial past – India was a colony of Great Britain – the sentiment was reciprocated by Mauritius' Foreign Minister Maneesh Gobin.

During his meetings, Jaishankar also reaffirmed during his speech India's consistent and continued support to Mauritius in its quest for progress as he held wide-ranging talks with the country's leadership. *—PTI*

Ex-Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao *PHOTO: PTI*

After SC rap, ex-HC judge resigns from probing KCR

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Supreme Court on Tuesday castigated Justice (retd) L Narasimha Reddy, the chairperson of the one-man Commission of Inquiry set up to probe alleged irregularities in the power sector during the tenure of ex-Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, for making observations about the merits of the matter at a press conference.

Under fire from the Supreme Court, Reddy, a former chief justice of the Patna High Court, withdrew from the panel, and the bench headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud asked the Telangana government to name his replacement. "Justice must be seen to be done. He is heading the Commission of Inquiry and expressed his views on merits in a press conference! We are giving you an opportunity to replace the judge in the Commission of Inquiry. Appoint some other judge," a bench headed by Justice Chandrachud said before rising for the lunch break. *—PTI*

2 more kids die of Chandipura virus, death toll hit 8

AHMEDABAD, 16 JULY

Two more children died of suspected Chandipura virus infection in Gujarat on Tuesday, taking the number of fatalities recorded in the state so far to eight, Health Minister Rushikesh Patel said. With this, the number of persons infected from the virus has gone up to 14, and eight of them have died, he told reporters in state capital Gandhinagar. Cases have been reported from Sabarkantha, Aravalli, Mahisagar, Kheda, Mehsana and Rajkot districts, the minister said. Three cases from the neighbouring states - two from Rajasthan and one from Madhya Pradesh - have also been treated in Gujarat hospitals, Patel said. Of the two patients from Rajasthan, one has died, he said. Patel said the state health department has undertaken intensive surveillance of the affected districts, and special advisory has been issued to community and primary health centres and sub-district hospitals as well as medical colleges to treat suspected cases with certain symptoms as Chandipura virus cases. *—PTI*

Bus hits tractor on Mumbai-Pune Expressway, 5 killed

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

At least five people were killed and 42 others injured when a bus carrying pilgrims hit a tractor on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, police said on Tuesday. The bus was ferrying 54 'warkaris' (devotees of Lord Vitthal) who were on their way to Pandharpur for the Ashadhi Ekadashi celebrations from their hometown Dombivli in Thane district near Mumbai, they said. The accident took place at around midnight near Panvel in Navi Mumbai, an official said. While on the expressway, the speeding bus hit the tractor. Three passengers from the bus and two from the tractor were killed, DCP Vivek Pansare said, adding that a woman was among the deceased. *—PTI*

Ambani wedding: Engineer arrested for bomb threat

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

The Mumbai police on Tuesday arrested a 32-year-old engineer Viral Shah from Vadodara in Gujarat over his social media post about a bomb threat at the wedding of Anant Ambani, the youngest son of industrialist Mukesh Ambani, here last week, an official said. Following the post, the police had stepped up security of the wedding event. "The police also launched an investigation into the potential threat," he said. During the probe, the Shah was traced to Vadodara, following which a team of the Mumbai crime branch was sent to the city in the neighbouring state and apprehended the accused, the official said, adding that the accused was being brought to Mumbai. Anant Ambani, the youngest son of Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani, married Radhika Merchant, the daughter of pharma tycoons Viren and Shaila Merchant on 12 July at a star-studded event held at Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai's Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC). *—PTI*

J'khand woman dies en-route to hospital on charpoy

LATEHAR, 16 JULY

A 45-year-old woman being carried by relatives on a 'charpoy', a traditional light bedstead, on their shoulders died on the way to a hospital in Jharkhand's Latehar district. Shanti Kujjur's kin was allegedly forced to take her to the hospital in that manner since ambulances did not come to their Baseria village in Mahuatand block because of bad road conditions. Describing the incident as "very sad", local Block Development Officer Amren Dang said he is gathering details of it. The BDO said all basic problems being faced by villagers including construction of a road on a priority basis will be addressed soon. *—PTI*

51% forms under PM Cares for Children scheme rejected

No specific reason has been given by the ministry for rejection

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

About 51 per cent of the applications received under the PM CARES for Children scheme for Covid orphans have been rejected, according to officials.

Launched at the peak of Covid-19 cases in India on 29 May, 2021, the PM CARES for Children Scheme aims to support children who lost their parents, a legal guardian, adoptive parents, or a surviving parent to the pandemic between 11 March, 2020 to 5 May, 2023.

According to official data, a total of 9,331 applications from 613 districts across 33 states and union territories (UTs) were received under the scheme. However, only 4,532 applications from 558 districts in 32 states and UTs were approved, while 4,781 applications were rejected and 18 are pending approval, according to the data shared by the Women and Child Development ministry official with PTI.

A total of 9,331 applications from 613 districts across 33 states and union territories were received under the scheme *PHOTO: PTI*

No specific reason has been given by the ministry for the rejection. Among the states, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number of applications, with 1,553, 1,511, and 1,007 applications, respectively. Approval rates in these states stand at 855 applications from Maharashtra, 210 from Rajasthan and 467 from Uttar Pradesh. The scheme's objective is to ensure comprehensive care and protection of these children in a sustained manner, providing health insurance, educational empowerment and financial support until they reach 23 years of age. *—PTI*

- Only 4,532 applications from 558 districts in 32 states and UTs were approved while 4,781 applications were rejected and 18 are pending approval

RAIN FURY CONTINUES

People make their way through a flooded area near Aluva Mahadeva Temple which got partially submerged due to rising water levels of the Periyar river following heavy rains, in Kochi, Kerala *PHOTO: PTI*

2 judges appointed to SC; top court gets 1st judge from Manipur

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Justices Nongmeikapam Kotiswar Singh and R Mahadevan were on Tuesday elevated as judges of the Supreme Court.

Once they take oath, the apex court will regain its sanctioned strength of 34, including the chief justice. Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir High Court, Justice N Kotiswar Singh, has become the first judge from Manipur to have been appointed to the top court.

"His appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court will provide representation to the North-East, and in particular he will be the first judge from the state of Manipur to be appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court," the SC Collegium had said on 11 July while recommending his name along with that of Justice Mahadevan.

R Mahadevan *PHOTO: X/@DEBANISHACHOM*

Nongmeikapam Kotiswar Singh *PHOTO: X/@BUPENDAMEITEI*

Justice Singh originally hails from Manipur. He was appointed as a judge of the Gauhati High Court in October 2011. Following the formation of the Manipur High Court, he was transferred there. In February 2023, he was appointed as chief justice of the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court and will demit office in February 2028 on attaining the age of 65 years.

Justice Mahadevan is at present the acting chief justice of the Madras High Court. While recommending his name for elevation, the Collegium had noted that "Justice Mahadevan belongs to a backward community from the state of Tamil Nadu. His appointment will bring diversity to Supreme Court Bench." *—PTI*

Cops to probe veracity of medical proof of Khedkar

PUNE, 16 JULY

Pune police will conduct an inquiry into the authenticity of medical certificates submitted by probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar, accused of misrepresenting herself under the physical disabilities category, an official said on Tuesday.

Khedkar, the 2023-batch officer currently posted in Washim district, had submitted to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) multiple medical certificates, one of them indicating visual impairment, under the Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD) provision.

The 34-year-old Maharashtra cadre officer faces accusations of using fraudulent means to clear her civil services exam, including allegedly misrepresenting herself under the physical disabilities and OBC categories, and misusing power and privileges during her posting in Pune.

The Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities has written a letter to the Pune police and the district Collectorate to verify the certificates submitted by Khedkar. It has also emerged that the controversial junior IAS officer had submitted a fitness certificate while securing admission to a private medical college in 2007. Last week, the Centre set up a single-member committee "to verify the candidature" of Khedkar and submit a report in two weeks. *—PTI*

Nagaland moves SC to prosecute 30 Armymen

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The Supreme Court has sought responses from the Centre and the Ministry of Defence on a plea of the Nagaland government challenging denial of sanction to prosecute 30 Army personnel, who were accused of killing 13 civilians in a botched-up operation to ambush militants in the state in 2021. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, on Monday, took note of the submissions of the state government and issued notices to the Centre and the Union Ministry of Defence.

The bench has now fixed the plea of Nagaland on 3 September. In April last year, the Central government had denied sanction to prosecute the Army men who were allegedly involved in the botched up ambush at Oting in Mon district of the state.

The state government has filed the writ petition under Article 32 of the Constitution. A plea under this Article can be filed alleging violation of fundamental rights. In July 2022, the top court had stayed prosecution of the Army personnel belonging to a special forces on the pleas from the wives of the accused, who claimed that their husbands were being prosecuted without the state obtaining mandatory sanction for prosecution. *—PTI*

- The statement claimed it has clinching evidence against the Army personnel yet the Centre has arbitrarily denied sanction to prosecute them

LAPSES AT MULTIPLE LEVELS

Rly: Kanchanjunga train accident was 'waiting to happen'

15 passengers died and several others were injured after 3 rear coaches of the Kanchanjunga Express derailed in West Bengal *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The Commissioner of Railway Safety has said the Kanchanjunga Express accident involving a goods train was "waiting to happen" due to lapses at multiple levels in managing train operations in automatic signal zones, and "inadequate counselling" of loco pilots and station masters.

In its probe report into the 17 June accident in West Bengal's Darjeeling district that left 15 people dead, including the loco pilot of the goods train, the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) also recommended implementation of the Automatic Train-protection system (KAVACH) on top priority. The CRS said wrong paper authority or T/A 912 to cross defective signals was issued to the loco pilot of the goods train involved by authorities concerned. Further, the paper authority didn't mention the speed that the goods train driver was supposed to follow while crossing the defective signal.

"In spite of issuing the same authority, different speed pattern was followed by loco pilots," it said. The CRS noted that only the Kanchanjunga Express followed the norm of moving at a maximum speed of 15 kmph and stopping for one minute at each defective signal while the rest of the six trains, including the goods train involved in the accident, didn't follow this norm.

Classifying the accident under the "Error in Train Working" category, the CRS said there was "inadequate counselling of loco pilots and station masters about train operation in automatic signalling territory creating misinterpretation and misunderstanding of rules."

In case of multiple signal failures, the CRS said there were three options left with the rail administration but they followed none of them in total. The first option was to let the drivers follow the general rule under which the loco pilot has been instructed to stop the train for one minute at the defective signal and then proceed with great caution till the next stop signal.

The third option was that authorities should have treated that as a "major signal failure" and followed Automatic Block System. Under the provision, only one train is allowed to enter between two stations and till the time the proceeding train crosses the next station, no train is permitted to enter from the first station. *—PTI*

Ratna Bhandar to be opened on Thursday in Puri

PURI, 16 JULY

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) said the inner chamber of the Ratna Bhandar will opened again between 9.51am and 12.15pm on Thursday to transfer ornaments to a temporary treasury set up within the 12th century shrine complex.

The decision was taken during a meeting attended by SJTA chief administrator Arabinda Padhee, Justice Biswanth Rath, chairman of the supervisory committee appointed by the state government to oversee the Ratna Bhandar's opening, Puri Collector, and other officials here on Tuesday.

The revered treasury was previously opened on Sunday after 46 years for an inventory of valuables and structural repairs.

Justice Rath said since it is practically impossible to shift all the chests as it will involve a huge manpower, valuables and ornaments within these containers will be relocated to a temporary treasury set up within the temple complex.

The measures come a day after a team of government officials reportedly failed to open the inner chambers of treasury with the help of duplicate keys. However, the officials break open three locks to carry out its conservation and inventory after 46 years.

—PTI with agencies

Jagannath Temple *PHOTO: PTI*

SC seeks reply from four states on illegal sand mining

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought responses from Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh within six weeks on a plea seeking investigation into illegal sand mining cases and the termination of leases of entities involved in it. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Sanjay Kumar said a fine of Rs 20,000 will be imposed if the states don't file counter affidavits in six weeks.

Though Rs 20,000 fine is not commensurate with the value of illegal sand mining alleged, it will force the states to file the affidavits, Justice Khanna said. The bench listed the matter for November.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner M Alagarsamy, submitted that the petition dates back to 2018 and said the four states had not filed affidavits on the status of illegal sand mining despite notices being issued to them. Bhushan, assisted by advocate Pranav Sachdeva, said massive illegal sand mining is going on. This is damaging the environment and till now only the Punjab government has filed its response.

After taking note of the submission, the bench asked Tamil Nadu to reply to the assertions made. On 24 January, 2019, the top court had issued notices and directed the Centre, CBI and five states to respond to the plea. *—PTI*

A fine of Rs 20,000 will be imposed if the states don't file counter affidavits in six weeks *PHOTO: PTI*

PROBE ORDERED

'Godman' illegally builds temple in U'khand

DEHRADUN, 16 JULY

A self-styled godman has allegedly built an unauthorised temple in the Suderdhunga river valley close to a sacred lake originating from a glacier in Uttarakhand's Bageshwar district, angering locals who have accused him of desecrating the lake by bathing in it.

According to officials, Baba Chaitanya Akash alias Aditya Kailash managed to convince some locals to help him construct the temple in the eco-sensitive zone by telling them that he had received divine orders in a dream to build it.

The matter was referred to the police for an investigation after an application was received from the locals in this regard, Bageshwar District Magistrate Anuradha Pal told PTI on the phone on Tuesday.

A self-styled godman, Baba Yogi Chaitanya Akash, constructs an unauthorised temple on government land in Uttarakhand *PHOTO: X*

The road to the spot where the temple has been built passes through difficult terrain and remains closed during monsoon, she said. "The structure made of wood and stone is a small temple. It is illegal and built on no man's land," Superintendent of Police (SP) Akshay Prahlad Konde said. It seems that some locals helped him build the structure after he told them that he had received divine orders to construct it in a dream. The self-styled godman has been living in the temple for the last 10-12 days and bathing in the sacred lake, Devi Kund, the SP said.

While the self-styled godman managed to convince some locals to help him, many others refused to be taken in by his theory and approached the administration demanding action against him, the SP said.

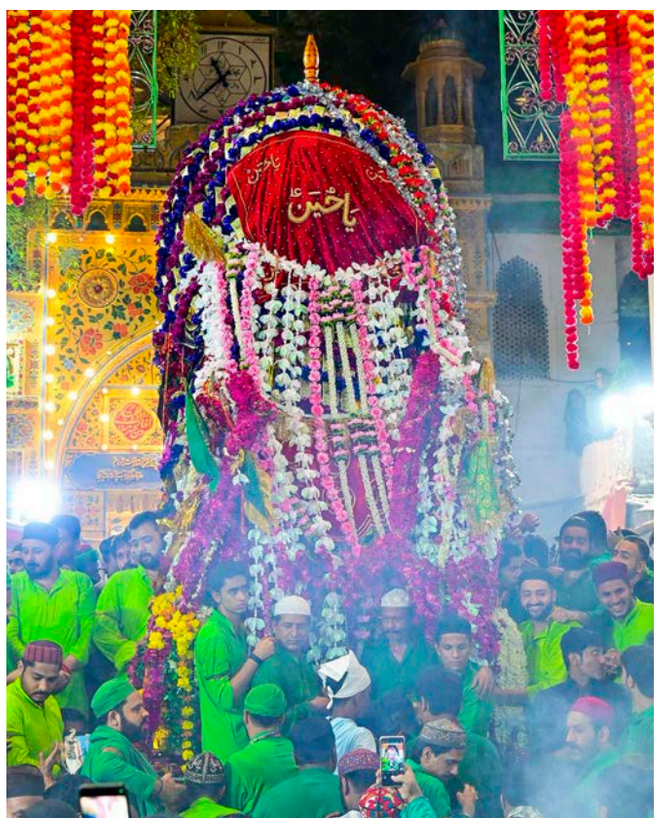
"The police are examining the matter from the law and order point of view but as the structure is located on no man's land in an eco-sensitive zone, the forest department will have to be involved for any action against the encroachment," Konde said. *—PTI*

ANTI-DRONE TECHNOLOGY

India's leading provider of anti-drone technology and defence training solutions, Zen Technologies, along with its subsidiary AI Turing Technologies based in Pune, launched four groundbreaking products. Prahasta (in picture) can be armed with various caliber weapons, making it a vital asset for commando operations. These innovations are Hawkeye, Barbarik-URCWS, Prahasta, and Sthir Stab 640. They aim to enhance tactical superiority and operational efficiency for defence

PHOTO: ZEN TECHNOLOGIES

Ashura: Why Muslims fast & mourn in Muharram



Shiite Muslims touch a horse during the battle of Karbal in Lahore; Shia mourners take part in a Muharram procession at the Ajmer Sharif Dargah, in Ajmer; A Shia mourner during the 8th Muharram procession in Srinagar ***PHOTO: PTI***

Ashura is marked on the 10th day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, by all Muslims.

It marks the day Nuh (Noah) left the Ark and the day Musa (Moses) was saved from the Pharaoh of Egypt by God.

The Prophet Muhammad used to fast on Ashura in Mecca, where it became a common tradition for the early Muslims. Ashura this year will be marked in most places on 16 July.

But for the Shia, it is also a major religious event to commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn Ibn Ali al-Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, who died at the Battle of Karbala in 680 AD.

Every year since then, many Shia mark Ashura by performing a pilgrimage to the mausoleum of Imam al-Hussein, which is traditionally to be held his tomb in Karbala.

- For the Shia, it is also a major religious event to commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn Ibn Ali al-Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, who died at the Battle of Karbala in 680 AD

Sunni Muslims commemorate the day through voluntary fasting.

Battle of Karbala

In early Islamic history, some Muslims supported Ali, the cousin of Prophet Muhammad and the fourth caliph (temporal and spiritual ruler) of the Muslim community.

Their support was based on the wish that the caliphate should stay within Prophet Muhammad's family.

They were called Shia, which means "the supporters" in Arabic.

Ali was murdered in 661 AD and his leading opponent Muawiya bin Abi Sufiyan became caliph.

After a brief battle, he and his followers were killed.

Shia commemoration

The death of Imam al-Hussein is considered by the Shia community to be a symbol of humanity's struggle against injustice, tyranny and oppression.

The primary rituals and observances on Ashura consist of public expressions of mourning.

Some in the Shia community resort to self-flagellation with chains and the blunt ends of swords.

This is intended to exemplify the suffering Imam al-Hussein experienced shortly before his beheading.

Muawiya was succeeded by his son Yazid. Ali's son, al-Hussein, refused to accept Yazid's legitimacy and fighting between the two broke out.

Al-Hussein, accompanied by his family and a few fighters, faced Yazid's army. A defiant al-Hussein refused to surrender even though he realised he was outnumbered.

However, in recent years, some Shia religious leaders have been discouraging the bloodletting, saying it creates a backward and negative image of their community. Such leaders encourage people to donate blood to patients in need.

Many Iraqis cook throughout the night and offer meals of rice with meat and chickpeas to the pilgrims attending the ceremonies. *—Al Jazeera*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساڈا

Homecare is a rich sector with growing pains in India

Kavitha Reddy

Nurses from India for several decades have been the caregivers for the world, service-oriented men and women initially from Kerala and later from the rest of India, continue to care for the patients and elderly globally.

Back in India, healthcare for a 1.45 billion population is a herculean task. Even though the large part of the population is dependent on the government healthcare system the private market is growing exponentially, and so is the important homecare sector.

Lifestyle diseases, the ageing population, an increase in chronic diseases, shortage of hospital beds, nuclear families, higher disposable income, access to alternate services, affordability, insurance coverage, and technology have been instrumental in a massive boom in the homecare sector. India's population is ageing rapidly with the number of people above 60 expected to reach 170 million by 2025.

The demographic shift has led to an increase in age-related diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, stroke, dementia, and Alzheimer's, which require ongoing care and management.

The Indian healthcare system also faces a significant shortage of hospital beds, with only 1.3 beds per 1,000 people, compared to the global average of 3.5 beds per 1,000 people.

This shortage has led to a substantial increase in demand for homecare services, as patients prefer to receive care in the comfort of their own homes.

The homecare market in India is estimated to be worth USD 5.5 billion and is expected to grow at a Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20 per cent over the next five years. This growth is driven by increasing demand for homecare services, industry initiatives to promote homecare, and the entry of new players into the market.

Since homecare services are both medical and non-medical assistance to patients in the comfort of their own homes, it reduces the need for hospitalisation and improves health outcomes.

The Indian government has recognised the potential of homecare services and has introduced initiatives to promote and regulate the sector.

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has established guidelines for homecare services, including standards for quality, safety, and patient care.

But homecare sector is facing significant challenges: ¬

There is a lack of financial incentives, subsidies, and tax benefits to encourage investment in homecare. Even though homecare is growing and is creating medical and non-medical jobs government has yet to recognise it as a separate sector and extend benefits.

Lack of training for non-medical resources, caregivers, and other healthcare is leading to a severe shortage of trained resources.

Inadequate medical insurance coverage for patients and lack of additional statutory policy framework in the insurance coverage is making homecare less accessible and less attractive to patients. ¬

Implementing policy changes in line with the governments globally to suit to the changing dynamics of the homecare sector that can improve the quality, accessibility, and affordability of homecare services, ultimately benefiting all the stakeholders is much needed. ¬

Healthcare services received at home from qualified nurses are exempt from GST. The GST exemption is not extending it to non-medical people who also provide important basic care, and this is a deterrent to the cost-sensitive market. ¬

Social security programmes such as the one implemented for gig workers and newspaper delivery people by Karnataka government are also a requirement for caregivers, as they may not get employment opportunities after the age of 45-47 years.

Homecare sector already have major private hospitals and some key player like Health Vista, HCAH, Skawin, Care24, Athulya and more. They are providing both short-term and long-term jobs for qualified nurses and for people who are service orientation but have only basic educational qualification.

Women from small town who come from difficult background are happy to do baby care or patient care and earn Rs 15,000 – Rs 18,000 per month than struggle doing odd jobs.

Karnataka Government has an opportunity to provide General Duty Assistant (GDA) training for men and women who just have basic educational qualification, and enhance their opportunity to get jobs in the homecare sector.

—Author is a Mentor at Skawin Medical & Healthcare

Women from small town who come from difficult background are happy to do babycare or patient care and earn Rs 15,000 – Rs 18,000 per month ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Behind Modi's Putin hug: Is India betting on Trump's win?

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets any male world leader, a bear hug is almost inevitable. Yet his embrace last week with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow has stirred firm public pushback from both Washington and Kyiv.

In a series of statements over several days, US officials criticised Modi's visit to Russia, the first since Putin launched a full-scale war on Ukraine in February 2022.

The US National Security adviser cautioned that strong ties with Russia were a "bad bet" for India. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said the US was concerned about India's relations with Russia. And Eric Garcetti, the US ambassador to India, warned New Delhi that it could not take its friendship with Washington "for granted".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was more direct. He referred to the deadly missile attack on Ukraine's largest children's hospital the day before Modi's Moscow visit. "It is a huge disappointment and a devastating blow to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's most bloody criminal in Moscow on such a day," he wrote on X.

So, did India miscalculate the geopolitical response to Modi's trip? Has the visit to Moscow and the public show of warmth towards Putin damaged India's relations with the US? And why do ties with Russia matter enough for India to take that gamble after years of investing in relations with the US?

Analysts say the answer lies in a combination of history, New Delhi's confidence in its ability to juggle multiple complex relations and a bet that former US President Donald Trump might well return to power and soften Washington's tough stance against Russia.

'My friend Donald Trump'

On Saturday, after a sniper positioned on a roof outside a Trump rally in Pennsylvania struck the former president with a bullet, killing another person and wounding two others, a volley of reactions tumbled in from around the world.

Among them was an X post by Modi, who condemned the attack, describing Trump as "my friend". The two leaders had a few years ago held joint public events in Houston and the Indian city of Ahmedabad, and a senior Indian government official told this writer the Modi administration was increasingly convinced that Trump might return to power in November.

Prime MInister Narendra Modi's meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin has stirred firm public pushback from both Washington and Kyiv ***PHOTO: PTI***

One way a Trump win would help India, analysts say, is by easing the pressure on New Delhi to turn away from Moscow.

A fine balance

To be sure, India-Russia relations have a long history of their own. A legatee of the Soviet Union with which India enjoyed close relations during the Cold War, Russia has maintained ties with New Delhi.

Historically, it has been the biggest supplier of weapons and other defence equipment to India – from the MIG and Sukhoi fighter jets to, more recently, the S-400 anti-missile defence systems.

Since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine, India has also dramatically ramped up its purchase of Russian crude. Russia is today India's biggest supplier of oil and those imports have led to the total volume of India-Russia trade – which used to hover about about USD 10 billion a year not long ago – skyrocketing to USD 63 billion.

In the West, India has faced criticism for these oil purchases, which – the allegation goes – help finance Russia's war. India has rejected the criticism and has argued that by buying Russian oil the West no longer wants, it is in fact helping keep global crude prices stable.

At the same time, India has in recent years doubled down on strengthening ties with the West, especially the US, whose help it sees as essential to warding off the perceived threat emanating from China's rise. India's defence dependence on Russia is lessening as it buys most new weapons systems from the US or European manufacturers.

India has insisted that it is merely exercising its strategic autonomy. But speaking last week in the eastern Indian city or Kolkata, Garcetti, the US ambassador, pushed back, saying that "there is no such thing as a strategic autonomy during a conflict", referring to the war in Ukraine.

Has India crossed a 'red line'?

The Russia trip also coincided with other sources of friction between India and the US. US prosecutors allege that an Indian government agent tried to orchestrate the assassination of Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a US national who holds dual citizenship with Canada. In June, the Czech Republic extradited, to the US, the Indian man who US prosecutors claim was trying to hire hitmen for the job.

In his comments in Kolkata, Garcetti referred to US concerns about India's civil rights landscape – many rights groups have accused the Modi government of targeting critics. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has listed India as a "country of particular concern" for the past five years, claiming that New Delhi is guilty of "engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations".

Still, analysts say that India and Modi have enough cards in their hands to be able to weather niggles in their relationship.

Whether Modi returns to Russia for a second time in three months, or whether he skips that meet, could point to just how much India is willing to test ties with the US, the government official said.

For now, said Sirohi, India and the US know that they need each other too much to risk upsetting their partnership. *—Al Jazeera*

GOP picks Trump for Prez, Vance as his VP

Their vote makes it official that Trump will lead the GOP in a third consecutive election

MILWAUKEE, 16 JULY

Cheering GOP delegates formally nominated Donald Trump for president at Monday's Republican National Convention kickoff. This was less than two days after an assassination attempt on the former president and shortly after he announced Ohio Sen JD Vance as his vice presidential running mate.

Their vote makes it official that Trump, who has long been the presumptive nominee, will lead the GOP in a third consecutive election.

The winner in 2016, he lost to current President Joe Biden in 2020. In November, he will again face Biden, who dismissed Vance as "a clone" of Trump on important issues.

Even as the delegates were voting, Trump announced he had chosen as his running mate the young Ohio senator, who rose to national attention with his best-selling memoir, "Hillbilly Elegy."

Trump's son Eric announced Florida's votes, which put the former president over the top for the nomination. Video screens in the arena read "OVER THE TOP" while the song "Celebration" played and delegates danced and waved Trump signs.

Saturday's shooting at a Pennsylvania rally, where Trump was injured and one man died, was not far from delegates' minds as they celebrated - a stark contrast to the anger and anxiety that had marked the previous few days. Some delegates chanted "fight, fight, fight" — the same words that Trump was seen shouting to the crowd as the Secret Service ushered him off the stage, his fist raised and face bloodied. Trump's campaign chiefs had designed the convention to feature a softer and more optimistic message, focusing on themes that would help a divisive leader expand his appeal among moderate voters and people of color.

With the shooting, however, the Democrats' turmoil after the debate, the GOP's potential governing agenda and even Trump's criminal convictions became secondary to concerns about political violence and the country's stability. —*PTI*

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump appears with vice presidential candidate JD Vance during the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Post shooting, Trump makes 1st appearance

Former US president Donald Trump, wearing a bandage partially covering his right ear, made his first public appearance at the Republican National Convention here since surviving an assassination attempt. Trump, 78, on Monday, entered the hall to roaring applause and holding his fist aloft towards the end of the first day of the four-day convention. He escaped an assassination bid over the weekend while attending a public rally in Philadelphia. Thousands of Republican delegates, supporters and members of the Republican party chanted "fight" as he entered the Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee.

US President Joe Biden **PHOTO: PTI**

TRUMP'S BULLSEYE COMMENT WAS A MISTAKE: BIDEN

WASHINGTON, 16 JULY

President Joe Biden told NBC News in an interview Monday that it was a "mistake" to say he wanted to put a "bull's-eye" on Republican nominee Donald Trump. However, he argued that the rhetoric from his opponent was more incendiary while warning that Trump remained a threat to democratic institutions.

The remark in question came during a private call with donors last week as Biden had been scrambling to shore up his imperiled candidacy with key party constituencies. During that conversation, Biden declared he was "done" talking about his poor debate performance and said it was "time to put Trump in the bull's-eye," saying Trump has gotten far too little scrutiny on his stances, rhetoric and lack of campaigning.

The NBC interview — during which, at times, Biden grew defensive under questions about his fitness for office — came as the president and his reelection team prepared to resume full-throttle campaigning after a brief pause following the weekend assassination attempt on Trump. —*AP*

US may get first Indian 2nd Lady if Trump wins

Republican vice presidential candidate JD Vance's wife Usha Chilukuri Vance **PHOTO: PTI**

MILWAUKEE, 16 JULY

Indian-American lawyer Usha Chilukuri Vance has burst into the national spotlight after her husband, JD Vance, was named by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump as his running mate.

Usha, 38, would be the possible first Indian American second lady, if Trump and Vance win the 5 November general elections against incumbent President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Usha joined her 39-year-old husband on Monday as he accepted the nomination in an acclimation vote by delegates — after the couple jubilantly greeted convention attendees.

The daughter of Indian immigrants, Usha grew up in a San Diego suburb. As of 2014, she was a registered Democrat.

Usha, a graduate of Yale Law School, is a civil litigation attorney at Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP. She has clerked for Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts. Usha and Vance met at Yale Law School where the two were studying.

- Usha, 38, would be the possible first Indian American second lady, if Trump and Vance win the 5 November general elections against incumbent President Joe Biden.

She would be the first Hindu spouse of a vice president — and would succeed second gentleman Doug Emhoff, who is the first Jewish spouse of a vice president, The New York Post reported.

The Vance couple was married in 2014 in Kentucky and were blessed by a Hindu priest at a different event, according to a New York Times profile.

Vance said that his wife "is not a Christian" but was "very supportive" of his deepening faith, the report added. —*AP*

GOVT JOB RESERVATION

5 dead, 100 hurt in B'desh quota protest

DHAKA, 16 JULY

Police fired tear gas and charged with batons during violent clashes between a pro-government student body and student protesters overnight, leaving at least five people dead and 100 injured at a public university outside Bangladesh's capital, police and students said Tuesday.

The violence spread early Tuesday at Jahangir Nagar University in Savar, outside Dhaka, where the protesters were demanding an end to a government job quota for family members of heroes who fought in Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971.

The quota system also reserves government jobs for women, disabled people and ethnic minority groups. The system was suspended in 2018, which brought similar protests to a halt at the time. But in a decision last month, Bangladesh's High Court asked for the 30 per cent quota for veterans' descendants to be restored.

That triggered fresh protests, with demonstrators supporting the 6 per cent quota for disabled people and ethnic groups but not for the descendants of the independence war heroes.

More than 50 people were treated overnight at Enam Medical College Hospital near Jahangir Nagar University as the violence continued for hours, said Ali Bin Solaiman, a medical officer of the hospital. He said at least 30 of them suffered pellet wounds. The protesters accused the Bangladesh Chhatra League, a student wing of the ruling Awami League party of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, of attacking their peaceful protests early Tuesday. The protesters had taken position in front of the official residence of the vice chancellor of the university early Tuesday, and media reports said later violence spread while police and the ruling party-backed student wing attacked them. —*PTI*

Students clash over quota system at Jahangir Nagar University at Savar outside Dhaka, Bangladesh on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

40 dead in Afghanistan's heavy rain

ISLAMABAD, 16 JULY

Heavy rains in eastern Afghanistan have killed at least 40 people and injured nearly 350 others, Taliban officials said Tuesday.

Separately, at least 17 died when a bus overturned on a main highway, official media said.

Sharafat Zaman Amar, a spokesperson for the Public Health Ministry, said that 347 people had been injured.

Among the dead were five members of the same family who were killed when the roof of their house collapsed in Surkh Rod district, according to provincial spokesperson Sediqullah Quraishi. Four other family members were injured.

About 400 houses and 60 electricity poles were destroyed across Nangarhar province, Quraishi said. Power was cut in many areas and there were limited communications in Jalalabad city, he said. The damage was still being assessed, Quraishi said.

Abdul Wali, 43, said much of the damage occurred within an hour. "The winds were so strong that they blew everything into the air. That was followed by heavy rain," he said. His 4-year-old daughter received minor injuries, he said. In May, exceptionally heavy rains killed more than 300 people and destroyed thousands of houses, mostly in the northern province of Baghlan, according to the World Food Program. —*AP*

People gather to clear the rubble of a house partially damaged by landslide due to heavy rainfall in Afghanistan's Surkhroad **PHOTO: PTI**

8 soldiers, 10 terrorists killed in attack on Pakistan military camp

PESHAWAR, 16 JULY

At least eight soldiers of the Pakistan Army and 10 terrorists were killed when a group of 10 terrorists attacked a major military cantonment in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the army said on Tuesday.

All 10 terrorists who launched the daring attack were also eliminated after they attempted to enter the Bannu Cantonment on Monday, with security forces effectively thwarting the move, the statement said.

The terrorists' failed attempt forced them to ram an explosive-laden vehicle into the perimeter wall of the cantonment, leading to the collapse of a portion of the wall and damaging the adjoining infrastructure.

Eight soldiers were killed in the ensuing operation and all the terrorists were "sent to hell", the statement added.

Pakistan has consistently raised its concerns with the interim Afghan government, asking them to deny persistent use of Afghan soil by the terrorists and take effective action against such elements, the statement said, adding that the Pakistani side will take all necessary measures as deemed appropriate against these threats emanating from Afghanistan.

Pakistan has witnessed an increase in terrorist activities over the past year. —*PTI*

A cop stands alert in a bunker to ensure security for Shiite Muslims attending a Muharram procession in Peshawar, Pakistan **PHOTO: PTI**

INDIAN AMONG 6 KILLED IN OMAN MOSQUE SHOOTING

DUBAI, 16 JULY

A rare shooting by multiple attackers at a Shiite mosque in Oman killed six people and wounded many more including a police officer, authorities said on Tuesday.

The Indian Embassy in Oman said that one Indian national died and another injured in the shooting. Pakistan's government said four of its nationals were dead and 30 hurt.

The Royal Oman Police said in a statement mentioned no motive or suspect and said the shooting occurred on Monday night in the Wadi Kabir neighbourhood of the capital, Muscat.

The state-run Oman News Agency said three attackers were killed. It reported 28 wounded of "different nationalities".

The shooting occurred on the eve of Ashoura, a remembrance of the 7th century martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hussein, that gave birth to their faith.

The day falls in the Islamic month of Muharram, one of the holiest months for Shiite Muslims.

Such violence is unusual in the sultanate on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula. The US Embassy warned its citizens to "stay away from the area".

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement it "strongly condemns the dastardly terrorist attack on Imam Bargah Ali bin Abu Talib" mosque.

Iran's foreign ministry condemned the attack. Iran is a Shiite theocracy. —*PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Whistleblowers ask SEC to probe OpenAI's NDAs

NEW YORK, 16 JULY

OpenAI whistleblowers have filed a complaint with Securities and Exchange Commission and asked the agency to investigate whether the ChatGPT maker illegally restricted workers from speaking out about the risks of its artificial intelligence technology. A letter to SEC Chair Gary Gensler representing "one or more anonymous and confidential" whistleblowers asks the agency to swiftly and aggressively enforce its rules against non-disclosure agreements that discourage employees or investors from raising concerns with regulators. The 1 July letter references a formal whistleblower complaint recently filed with the SEC. The Washington Post was the first to report on the letter. OpenAI said that its policies protect employees' rights to make disclosures. —*AP*

Thailand to roll out $13.8B handout plan to citizens

BANGKOK, 16 JULY

Thailand's Prime Minister has said that eligible businesses and individuals can register from August for digital cash hand-outs, a controversial programme that will cost billions of dollars and is meant to boost the lagging economy. The government announced in April the widely criticised ambitious plan, named the Digital Wallet, meant to give 10,000 baht to 50 million citizens in digital money to spend at local businesses. Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin posted on the social platform X on Monday, saying the registration will begin 1 August and that he has given instructions to ensure the smooth implementation of the program. The "Digital Wallet" was a major campaign promise of the ruling party ahead of last year's general election. —*AP*

Rolls Royce's ex-design boss stabbed to death

BERLIN, 16 JULY

THE British ex-head of design at Rolls Royce has been stabbed to death on his doorstep. Ian Cameron was found dead at home on Friday with cops now launching a manhunt for the killer. The 74-year-old was found by police in the entrance area of his Herrsching am Ammersee, Bavaria, home after a man was said to have approached the home and stabbed him, Bild reported. Ian's wife, Verena Kloos, was able to escape over a wall during the attack to the neighbour's house and called emergency services. Cameron is a vintage car expert and was known to have kept a number of high value artefacts at his £3m mansion.

—*Courtesy, The Sun*

North Korean diplomat defects to South Korea

SEOUL, 16 JULY

South Korea's spy agency said on Tuesday that a senior North Korea diplomat based in Cuba has fled to South Korea, the latest in a series of defections by members of the North's ruling elite in recent years. The National Intelligence Service said media reports on the defection of a North Korean counselor of political affairs in Cuba were true. A brief statement by the NIS public affairs office gave no further details. South Korea's mass-circulation Chosun Ilbo newspaper reported earlier Tuesday that diplomat Ri Il Kyu fled to South Korea with his wife and children in November. He had decided to defect because of what he called disillusionment with North Korea's political system, an unfair job evaluation by Pyongyang's Foreign Ministry, and the Ministry's disapproval of his hopes to visit Mexico to treat his neural damage. —*AP*

'TO CONTROL POPULATION'

Romania to cull 500 bears after outrage over hiker's death

BUCHAREST, 16 JULY

Romania's government approved the culling of almost 500 bears this year following a deadly attack on a hiker that caused a nationwide outcry.

The law adopted on Monday in an emergency meeting of parliament authorises the culling of 481 bears in a bid to control "overpopulation" in the protected species, a figure that is more than twice last year's total of 220 bears culled.

As well as adopting the new legislation, the parliament held a moment of silence in memory of the 19-year-old hiker who was mauled to death last week on a popular trail in Romania's Carpathian Mountains.

Romania's Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu had summoned lawmakers back from their summer recess to attend the emergency session of parliament.

Bears have killed 26 people and severely injured 274 others over the last 20 years in Romania, according to the country's environment ministry. The ministry estimates there are up to 8,000 bears in the country, which has Europe's largest population of brown bears outside Russia.

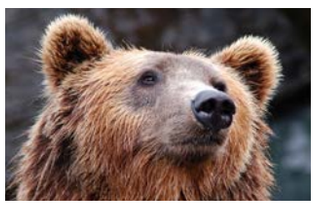


PHOTO: PIXABAY

Wildlife experts say the animals that cause problems – dubbed "trash-bin bears" in Romania – will continue to scavenge in cities as urban sprawl eats into their natural habitat, and as climate change limits their food sources.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) biologist Calin Ardelean told the AFP news agency that "the law solves absolutely nothing", arguing that the focus should be shifted towards "prevention and intervention". According to WWF, the increased cull will not solve the problem in Romania unless measures are put in place to keep bears away from communities, waste management is improved and people are prevented from feeding the bears. Foundation Conservation Carpathia, a private conservation group, said "the number of problem bears and the damages they cause fluctuates yearly and is not directly proportional to the rise in bear density". —*Al Jazeera*

PHOTO: XXX

Gold rallies ₹550; silver jumps ₹400 amid global cues

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Gold prices rallied by Rs 550 to Rs 75,700 per 10 grams in the local market on Tuesday on the back of fresh buying by jewellers as well as strong trends in the international markets.

According to All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal rates had closed at Rs 75,150 per 10 grams on Monday. In the national capital, gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent purity quoted higher at Rs 75,700 per 10 grams and Rs 75,350 per 10 grams, respectively. Traders attributed the rise in gold prices to a pick-up in demand by local jewellers and retailers in the domestic market. In addition, silver prices also jumped by Rs 400 to Rs 94,400 per kg. It had ended at Rs 94,000 per kg in the previous session.

—PTI

Rupee rises 3 paise to close at 83.58 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day 3 paise higher at 83.58 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, on firm domestic markets and sustained inflow of foreign capital.

Forex traders said a decline in crude oil prices favoured the rupee, while a strong US dollar capped sharp gains.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.59, and touched an intraday high of 83.53 and a low of 83.60 against the dollar during the trading session. It finally settled at 83.58 (provisional) against the American currency, registering a gain of 3 paise from its previous close. . Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at marginally higher by at 104.29. *—PTI*

Bharat Agri eyes ₹800 cr profit from Mumbai project

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Bharat Agri Fert & Realty Ltd expects Rs 800 crore revenue from its new housing project in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).

In a statement on Tuesday, the company said it has launched a high-rise tower, Wembley-24 in Majiwada, Thane comprising 457 residential flats. "The Majiwada project is projected to generate total realisations of approximately Rs 800 crore over the next four years on a pro-rata basis, with the project's cost estimated at approximately Rs 300 crore, as the land is owned by the company," it said. On the launch day, the company witnessed an overwhelming response with pre-sales of around 150 units.

—PTI

India's gems, jewellery exports dip 13.44% in June

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

India's overall gems and jewellery exports witnessed an on-year decline of 13.44 per cent in June at Rs 15,939.77 crore (USD 1,909.57 million) amid muted demand in overseas markets, according to data by Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC). The total gems and jewellery exports stood at Rs 18,413.88 crore (USD 2,240.77 million) during June 2023, the GJEPC data added. The overall exports of cut and polished diamonds dipped by 25.17 per cent in June to Rs 8,496.87 crore (USD 1,017.87 million), compared to Rs 11,354.67 crore (USD 1,382.13 million) for the same period of the previous year. However, the total gold jewellery exports went up by 7.97 per cent at Rs 5,074.27 crore (USD 608.01 million) as compared to Rs 4,699.56 crore for same period last year.

—PTI

Sensex, Nifty close at record high levels

Mtk has been on record-breaking run for last 3 days as foreign investors buy in equities

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty settled at record high levels in their third straight day of gains on Tuesday following buying in FMCG, telecom and select IT shares and FII inflows.

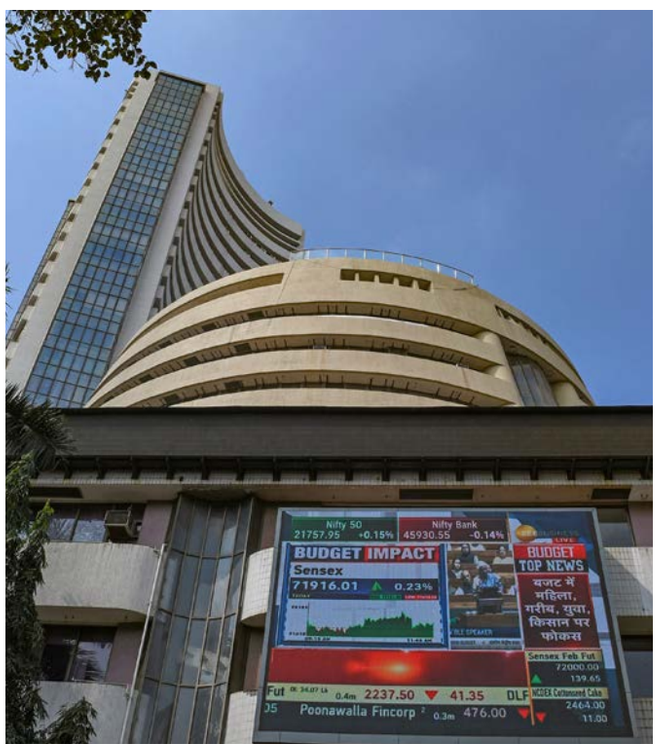
The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 51.69 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a new lifetime high of 80,716.55. During the day, it advanced 233.44 points or 0.28 per cent to hit a fresh record high of 80,898.30.

The NSE Nifty went up by 26.30 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 24,613. Intra-day, it rallied 74.55 points or 0.30 to hit a new record peak of 24,661.25.

Sensex and Nifty have been on a record-breaking run since Friday as foreign investors have turned buyers in the Indian equities ahead of the presentation of the Union budget for 2024-25. Encouraging quarterly results by bluechips have also supported the rally despite high valuation concerns, according to analysts.

Among Sensex shares, Hindustan Unilever, Bharti Airtel, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Mahindra & Mahindra, ICICI Bank, ITC and Asian Paints were the biggest winners.

On the other hand, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Reliance Industries, NTPC, UltraTech Cement and Power Grid were among the laggards. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,684.78 crore, according to exchange data. Markets will remain closed on Wednesday for Muharram. *—PTI*



BSE Sensex climbed 51.69 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a new lifetime high of 80,716.55 **PHOTO: ANI**

SPICEJET SHARES JUMP 7% AFTER EARNINGS REPORT

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Shares of budget carrier SpiceJet jumped over 7 per cent in morning trade on Tuesday after the company reported a multi-fold jump in standalone profit in the January-March quarter of 2023-24.

The stock climbed 7.35 per cent to Rs 60 on the BSE.

SpiceJet on Monday reported a multi-fold jump in standalone profit to Rs 119 crore in the January-March quarter of 2023-24, compared to Rs 16.85 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

The revenue from operations during the quarter under review, however, declined 20 per cent to Rs 1,719.37 crore, from Rs 2,144.85 crore in the fourth quarter of the financial year ended March 31, 2023, according to a regulatory filing.

For the full fiscal 2023-24, the airline posted a loss of Rs 409.43 crore, against a loss of Rs 1,503 crore in FY23, the filing said.. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

ONGC share price skyrockets to all-time high

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) achieved a milestone as its share price surged past Rs 323 with a 5.18 per cent intraday gain on Tuesday.

This performance propelled ONGC's market capitalization to Rs 4.06 lakh crore, marking the highest in the company's history.

The surge in share prices is a testament to ONGC's robust financial health and strategic direction.

Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, took to social media platform X (formerly known as Twitter) to celebrate this achievement.

The government's focus on energy security and self-reliance has also played a crucial role in driving growth and profitability for companies like ONGC.

ONGC, as India's largest oil and gas exploration and production company, has consistently demonstrated resilience and adaptability in a dynamic market environment.

The company's investments in technology, infrastructure, and sustainable practices have positioned it as a key player. *—ANI*

AFTER SC VERDICT

Banks must set up panel over fraud cases: RBI

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Following the Supreme Court judgment of 27 March, 2023, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday came up with the revised norms that lenders must follow before classifying loan accounts as fraud.

The apex bank issued its revised Master Directions on Fraud Risk Management for Regulated Entities (REs).

It provides for a reasonable time of not less than 21 days for the persons or entities against whom the SCN is served to respond.

The RBI mandates the banks to constitute a Committee of the Board known as the 'Special Committee of the Board for Monitoring and Follow-up of Cases of Frauds' (SCBMF) with a minimum of three members of the Board, consisting of a whole-time director and a minimum of two independent directors or non-executive directors.

The RBI further added that banks have to set up an appropriate organizational structure for the institutionalization of fraud risk management within their overall risk management functions or departments. A senior official in the rank of at least a general manager or equivalent shall be responsible for monitoring and reporting fraud.

These revised directions will be applicable to commercial banks, upper-middle- and base-level non-banking finance companies, all India financial institutions, and cooperative banks.

Since the classification of an account as fraud entails serious civil consequences for the borrower, the directions must be construed reasonably by reading into them the requirement of observing the principles of natural justice, the SC said. *—ANI*

Govt likely to lower fiscal deficit target up to 5% of GDP in Budget

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The government is likely to lower fiscal deficit to 4.9-5 per cent of the GDP for this financial year in the upcoming Budget aided by revenue buoyancy.

The government had pegged the fiscal deficit estimate at 5.1 per cent for the current fiscal year when it presented the interim Budget in February.

"The union government is likely to set a fiscal deficit target at 4.9-5 per cent, lower than projected 5.1 per cent of GDP, without compromising the capital expenditure target of Rs 11.1 lakh crore," ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar told PTI. The government achieved a fiscal deficit of 5.6 per cent of the GDP during the previous financial year.

The incremental revenue receipts of Rs 1.2 lakh crore can be split to increase the revenue spending and facilitate fiscal consolidation, she said, adding, the government could utilise it for spurring consumption by providing some income tax sops.

If the government continues with capex at 3.4 per cent of GDP over the medium term (in line with the FY2025 Interim Budget), then incremental fiscal would require a sustained compression in revenue deficit, she said. *—PTI*

Government achieved a fiscal deficit of 5.6% last year **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

'SUGAR INDUSTRY FACES ISSUE DUE TO NO MSP HIKE'

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 16 JULY

The sugar industry in the country has been facing problems as the Centre has not increased its Minimum Support Price (MSP) since five years, a sugar units federation representative claimed on Tuesday. Problems like short margins in working capital, debts may arise in the sugar industry again as the central government does not take fast decisions, National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Limited director Jaiprakash Dandegaonkar told PTI. "The government has increased the FRP of sugarcane three times but there is no hike in the MSP of sugar," he said. Such policies are posing a problem for the sugar industry, he claimed. "We are just demanding the cost of production of sugar. We want at least Rs 41 (per kg) as the cost of production. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

GOVT IMPLEMENTS 5% TAX ON AIRCRAFT, ENGINE PARTS

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Union Civil Aviation Ministry has announced a uniform 5 per cent Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) rate on all aircraft and aircraft engine parts, effective 15 July, 2024, according to a press release of the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

Announced by Union Civil Aviation Minister, Kinjrapu Rammohan Naidu on Monday, the decision marks a strategic move to simplify the tax structure, eliminate disparities caused by varying GST rates ranging from 5 per cent to 28 per cent, and address challenges such as inverted duty structures and GST accumulation.

The Union Minister applauded the efforts of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Finance, and other stakeholders who have worked diligently to achieve this policy adjustment recommended by the GST Council in its 53rd meeting on 22nd June 2024, the uniform 5 per cent IGST rate aims to reduce operational costs, resolve tax credit issues, and attract investment.

Further, the rising demand in the sector has pushed the number of airplanes operating in the sector. *—ANI*

SEBI issues unit-based employment benefit schemes

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Capital markets regulator SEBI came out with a framework for a unit-based employment benefit scheme for investment trusts -- REITs and InvITs.

Under the framework, SEBI has prescribed the manner of the implementation of the scheme through a trust, the manner of receiving units by the employee benefit trust and the manner of allotment of units to the employee benefit trust by REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) and InvIT (Infrastructure Investment Trust).

As per SEBI, the investment manager or manager can receive the units of InvIT/REIT in lieu of management fees, for the purpose of providing unit-based employee benefits.

—PTI

Paytm gets SEBI warning, shares fall 2%

PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

One 97 Communications, which is Paytm's parent firm, has got an 'administrative warning letter' from SEBI over related party transactions it had entered into with Paytm Payments Banks (PPBL) in FY22 without due approval of either audit committee or the shareholders.

In a BSE filing, company said it consistently acted in compliance with SEBI regulations.The fintech firm further said it is "committed to upholding and demonstrating the highest compliance standards and shall also submit its response to SEBI."

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), in a letter dated July 15, had said it had conducted an examination in relation to the disclosure of financial and other information relating to One 97 Communications and its associate Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL).

According to the letter by the markets regulator, the company claimed that it had provided a cumulative numerical value of the transactions undertaken with PPBL by the company and its subsidiaries for reference by the shareholders and that transactions between subsidiaries of OCL and PPBL do not qualify as RPTs during the FY 2021-22.

Meanwhile, the stock dipped 2 per cent to settle at Rs 459.75 on the BSE. At the NSE, it went lower by 2.45 per cent to Rs 458.10. *—PTI*

BOOZE AT YOUR DOORSTEP

Swiggy, Zomato likely to deliver alcohol

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Online delivery platforms like Swiggy, Zomato, and BigBasket may soon deliver alcohol beverages such as beer, wine and liqueurs in New Delhi, Punjab, Goa, Karnataka, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, said a report.

Responding to the decision that might be taken, an executive said that this step was to reach out a growing population, especially in massive cities and also keeping the changing customer preferences in mind.

Highlighting that women and senior citizens feel uncomfortable buying beverages from the traditional liquor stores, a demand has increased for more convenient and comfortable shopping experiences, such as home delivery.

Online deliveries of alcohol have resulted in 20-30 per cent increase in sales in West Bengal and Odisha **PHOTO: ANI**

In 2020, Swiggy and Zomato launched online alcohol delivery in non-metro areas to diversify their services during the Covid-19 lockdown when their core business was significantly impacted.

Delivery of alcohol to homes is permitted only in Odisha and West Bengal, according to the report. The temporary approval for liquor deliveries during the Covid-19 lockdown in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Assam was a success despite restrictions, per the report. According to retail industry executives, online deliveries have resulted in a 20-30 per cent increase in sales in West Bengal and Odisha.

As states like New Delhi, Karnataka, Haryana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Goa, and Kerala consider pilot projects, the success of these initiatives could lead to wider acceptance and implementation across India.

—Salar news with agencies

GTRI worried over import of precious metals from UAE

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Think tank GTRI on Tuesday expressed serious concerns over spurt in import of precious metals from the UAE under a free trade agreement and demanded an investigation as it is impacting domestic jewellery industry and leading to potential annual revenue loss.

Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that by addressing these issues, authorities can ensure the integrity of import practices, safeguard domestic industries, and prevent significant revenue losses.

Seeking an urgent review of the agreement, it said the India-UAE comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) allows unlimited imports of gold, silver, platinum, and diamonds from the UAE into India with zero tariffs in the coming years.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

GTRI also claimed that many imports do not meet Rules of Origin conditions, hence do not qualify for concessions, and raising the "strong possibility of money laundering."

With regard to imports being routed through GIFT city, GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava suggested that there should a CAG audit to investigate pre-arranged deals and invoice manipulation.

Currently, India imports rough diamonds, which are then cut and polished domestically before exporting. *—PTI*

Lakshya is underdog in Olympics: Coach

The 22-year-old aims to become first Indian male shuttler to finish on Olympic podium

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

The presence of some established foes notwithstanding, Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen has got a "fair" draw in his debut Olympics, according to his coach Vimal Kumar, who expects the youngster to play freely in Paris thanks to his "underdog" status and some technical improvements in his overall game.

World No. 19 Sen's path to an Olympic medal has multiple hurdles as he will need to get past familiar Indonesian nemesis Jonatan Christie, last Olympics' surprise semifinalist Kevin Cordon from Guatemala, and Julian Carraggi from Belgium in Group L.

"I think it (the draw) is very fair, I feel it is a very reasonable draw for him," Vimal, a former India coach, told PTI from Marseille, France where Sen is currently training ahead of the Paris Olympics.

"A couple of times, he has lost to Jonathan Christie in close matches. It's a 50-50 match. You have to convert (chances) if you have to get to the second stage. In my opinion, Lakshya has nothing to lose. He will be the underdog and he can play a lot more freely," he asserted.

Describing Sen as a big-match player, Vimal said he expects Sen to trump former Asian Games champion Christie, who was also a part of Indonesia's Thomas Cup-winning team in 2022.

Vimal said Sen has worked on his front-court alertness and closing-stage composure. The 22-year-old would be aiming to become the first Indian male shuttler to finish on the Olympic podium.

India's previous badminton medals at the Games have been clinched by Saina Nehwal (bronze in 2012, London) and P V Sindhu (silver in 2016, Rio de Janeiro and bronze in 2020, Tokyo)

"Jonathan will be the last match of the group and Lakshya should pull through. So I see a lot of positives.

—PTI

Lakshya Sen PHOTO: PTI

Moudgil secures a place in shooting contingent for Paris Games

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Anjum Moudgil PHOTO: PTI

Overcoming mental demons after being left out of the Indian team from last year's Asian Games and the World Championships was key to shooter Anjum Moudgil securing a Paris Olympic berth.Former world no.1 Moudgil, a world championships and Commonwealth Games medallist, competed in two events during the last edition in Tokyo. She finished 15th in the 50m rifle 3 position and 18th in the 10m air rifle.

—PTI

Balaji has explosive game: Bopanna

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Aging like fine wine, Rohan Bopanna is all fired up for his last hurrah at the Olympic Games. Not the one who would rail against circumstances or crib about not having the strongest of partners, the veteran Indian tennis player says his comrade N Sriram Balaji has enough firepower and the scratch pairing is potent enough to test the big teams in Paris.

Had Bopanna been ranked outside the top 10, India would not have any representation in the men's doubles event at the Paris Olympics, starting July 26.

The 44-year-old had to make a choice between Balaji and Yuki Bhambri and after consulting his coaches -- Scott Davidoff and Balachandran Mannikkath -- he eventually settled for the more "athletic and agile" Balaji.

"I believe that when we go out there, we genuinely have a chance to win every match, whoever we play against. It's not like we're just going to be written off, I feel," Bopanna told PTI in an exclusive interview. Bopanna has reason to have that confidence in Balaji's ability to rise to the occasion. He had a chance to test Balaji at the French Open where Bopanna was pushed along with Matthew Ebden by the Tamil Nadu player and his Mexican partner Miguel Reyes-Varela.

Not only this, Balaji had a consistent run on the ATP Tour where he scalped a few big names such as Americans Rajeev Ram and Austin Krajicek both top-10 players at the Houston ATP 250 event on clay.

With his German partner Andre Begemann, Balaji also defeated Austria's top 50 players Alexander Erler and Lucas Miedler.

N Sriram Balaji PHOTO: ASIAN TENNIS FEDERATION

- Aging like fine wine, Rohan Bopanna is all fired up for his last hurrah at the Olympic Games. Not the one who would rail against circumstances or crib about not having the strongest of partners, the veteran Indian tennis player says his comrade N Sriram Balaji has enough firepower and the scratch pairing is potent enough to test the big teams in Paris.

Balaji also showed that he could quickly adapt to conditions when he was asked to do the singles duty during the Davis Cup tie against Pakistan on grass. The rival was not of the highest quality but Balaji showed that he was willing to come out of his comfort zone if the team demands.

"The idea is to go prepared, at least believe in as a team. That is what we're trying to do. With Bala, he has the firepower to do well," Bopanna said.

He also gave his reason for picking Balaji over Bhambri.

"I felt Balaji, depending on the surface we're playing with, which is the clay, would have been the ideal partner. Currently, even if you look at (Matthew) Ebden, who I'm playing with, he's more agile, more explosive on that surface.

—PTI

13 athletes from Indian Army to take part in Paris Olympics

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Thirteen athletes from the Indian Army are set to take part in seven disciplines at the upcoming Paris Olympics, the force said on Monday. The Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) of the Army said this in a post on X. "#General Upendra Dwivedi, #COAS interacted (on a video conference) with #IndianArmy athletes who are set to represent India in the upcoming #Paris Olympics2024. #COAS extended his best wishes to the athletes & expressed his admiration for their dedication and hard work, emphasizing that their achievements are a source of immense pride for the #Indian Army and the Nation. "13 #Indian Army athletes will be participating in 7 disciplines at the #Paris Olympics2024. —PTI

Shaurya Bawa assures India of a medal

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

India's Shaurya Bawa guaranteed himself a medal as he moved to the semifinals with a hard-fought 3-2 win over Malaysian Low Wa-Sern in the World Junior Squash Championships in Houston. The 18-year-old from Delhi, thus, becomes only the second Indian male to reach the semifinals after Kush Kumar, who reached the last four stages in 2014. In a thrilling clash that lasted 80 minutes, Bawa was down 6-9 and 7-10 in the fifth game but remarkably saved three match balls to eke out a 2-11 11-4 10-12 11-8 12-10 victory in the boys' quarterfinals on Monday. With the win, Bawa set up a semifinal clash with Egyptian top-seed Mohamed Zakaria. Meanwhile, compatriot Anahat Singh bowed out from the girls' quarterfinals for a third straight year.

—PTI

Southgate resigns as England manager

LONDON, 16 JULY

Gareth Southgate said on Tuesday he was resigning as England manager, two days after they lost to Spain in the Euro 2024 final. "It's time for change, and for a new chapter. Sunday's final in Berlin against Spain was my final game as England manager," Southgate said in a statement. Names immediately bandied around as 53-year-old Southgate's successor are Newcastle manager Eddie Howe, and two former Chelsea handlers.

—PTI

SLC announces free entry for public in Women's Asia Cup

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) on Tuesday announced free entry for the public duringthe women's Asia Cup, beginning in Dambulla on Friday. Eight teams -- India,Pakistan, Bangladesh, hosts Sri Lanka, Thailand, UAE, Nepal, and Malaysia -- areset to battle it out for top honors at Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium."The Women'sAsia Cup 2024 is here, and entry is FREE!" SLC tweeted on Tuesday.In all, 15 games willbe played, including two semifinals and the final.India are set to opentheir campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan on Friday.*—PTI*

COPA AMERICA CHAOS

Colombia soccer body prez, son among 27 arrested

MIAMI GARDENS, 16 JULY

Colombia's soccer federation president and his son were among 27 people arrested during the crowd control issues that broke out Sunday at the Copa America final between Argentina and Colombia, police said Monday.

Ramón Jesurún and his son Ramon Jamil Jesurun were detained after the event at Hard Rock Stadium and charged, Miami-Dade police detective Andre Martin told The Associated Press. Martin did not disclose the charges.

Ramon Jamil Jesurun was booked on three counts of battery on an official, arrest records showed.

Colombia's soccer federation didn't immediately respond Monday to a request for comment from the AP.

Ramón Jesurún, 71, has been president of the Colombian soccer federation since 2015 and is a vice president of CONMEBOL, South American soccer's governing body that organizes the Copa America tournament.

In a statement released Monday, the organization said it regrets the scene in which countless fans entered the stadium without tickets and "tarnished" the event. The game was delayed for more than an hour as authorities worked to control the situation, eventually deciding to let some fans in without going through security checkpoints.

"In this situation, CONMEBOL was subject to the decisions made by the Hard Rock Stadium authorities, according to the contractual responsibilities established for security operations," the organization said.

"In addition to the preparations determined in this contract, CONMEBOL recommended to these authorities the procedures proven in events of this magnitude, which were NOT taken into account."

Hard Rock Stadium — the site of 2026 World Cup matches — said security was a shared responsibility between its stadium officials, the organization, CONCACAF (the governing body that oversees soccer in North and Central America and the Caribbean), and local police.

—PTI

Hardik Pandya PHOTO: PTI

Pandya to lead India in T20Is against Lanka

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya is all set to lead India in the three-match T20 International series against Sri Lanka starting 27 July.

However, one of the heroes of India's T20 World Cup victory in June will take a break during the three-match ODI series, which is scheduled in August, due to "personal reasons". "Hardik Pandya was India's T2O vice-captain under Rohit Sharma. He is completely fit and available for the three-match T20I series and will lead the side," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The T20Is against Sri Lanka will run from 27 July to 30 in Pallekele, followed by the ODIs from August 2 to 7 in Colombo. The squad for the series is expected to be announced in the next couple of days.

While there is still no clarity on who would be Pandya's deputy, the toss-up is between Shubman Gill, who recently captained India to a 4-1 series win over Zimbabwe, and Suryakumar Yadav, who led the side during the T20Is against South Africa last year.

About the ODIs, the official confirmed that Pandya has asked for leave and has already communicated this to regular skipper Rohit Sharma, who is also taking a break from this series.

For the ODIs, KL Rahul, who led in the last ODI series in South Africa, and Gill are in contention for the leadership role.

—PTI

Mbappé welcomed by Real Madrid fans at Santiago

MADRID, 16 JULY

Kylian Mbappé finally put on a Real Madrid jersey on Tuesday, fulfilling his childhood dream in front of a packed Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Nearly 80,000 fans were in hand at the Bernabeu to welcome the 25-year-old France star during his official presentation as the club's newest player.

After signing his five-year contract with the Spanish powerhouse alongside club president Florentino Pérez, Mbappé entered the stage set up at the Bernabeu to loud cheers from the Madrid fans.

Wearing the No. 9 jersey, Mbappé smiled broadly and waved to the fans who chanted his name, then embraced Pérez and former Madrid player and coach Zinedine Zidane, who invited Mbappé to visit the Spanish club for the first time when he was just a teenager.

Kylian Mbappe PHOTO: PTI

"It's an incredible day for me," Mbappé told the crowd, in Spanish. "Since being a kid I dreamed about playing for Madrid and today I'm here. It means a lot to me."

Mbappé's relatives, club officials, and several former players were on the stage at the Bernabeu, which had its roof closed for the midday ceremony in the Spanish capital.

—PTI

Messi loses fitness battle at Copa America

BUENOS AIRES, 16 JULY

Lionel Messi cried uncontrollably after he exited from a Copa America final before full-time for the first time in his career. Beyond the severe pain in his right ankle on Sunday night in Miami Gardens, the tears on the face of Argentina's captain showed a deeper anguish.

Despite winning the title in one of his "last battles," as Messi described this Copa, the 37-year-old superstar did not pass the fitness test that could have opened the way for him to play his sixth World Cup in 2026. Argentina successfully defended its South American title with a hard-fought 1-0 extra-time win against Colombia. Messi left the pitch in Hard Rock Stadium in the 64th minute, breaking down without being touched.

The Copa was Messi's first major tournament since leaving European soccer to play in the less competitive Major League Soccer in the U.S. Still, he has missed several games over the last year for his Inter Miami club and Argentina due to muscle issues. Messi felt muscular pains in his right leg in the second group match against Chile, which sidelined him from the following game against Peru.

—PTI

Lionel Messi PHOTO: PTI

At 68, Nagal attains career-high ATP ranking

NEW DELHI, 16 JULY

Olympic-bound Sumit Nagal continued his ascent in the ATP singles chart, climbing to a career-high ranking of 68.

The 26-year-old rose five spots in the latest ATP ranking list released on Monday. His previous best was 71.

Nagal thus moves past former world No. 71 Sashi Menon to become the fourth highest-ranked Indian man since 1973. Vijay Amritraj (ranked 18th in 1980), Ramesh Krishnan (ranked 23rd in 1985) and Somdev Devvarman (ranked 62nd in 2011) are the only other Indian players who have held a higher rank than Nagal.

A string of impressive results in recent times has not only helped Nagal improve his ranking but also make the cut for singles event at the Paris Games. Nagal, who will be the sole Indian in the men's singles event at the Paris Olympics, has so far logged 779 ATP points.

Sumit Nagal PHOTO: PTI

The year began with a win against Alexander Bublik, the 31st seed from Kazkakhstan at the Australian Open. He also competed at the French Open and Wimbledon. He had won the men's singles crown at the Heilbronn Neckarcup 2024 Challenger event in Germany earlier this month and the Chennai Open in February.

—PTI

MCA ELECTION

Ajinkya Naik bats for indoor academy

MUMBAI, 16 JULY

Mumbai should have an indoor cricket academy with an "actual turf pitch" MCA secretary Ajinkya Naik, who is fighting the state association's presidential election against Sanjay Naik said on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, the third candidate in the form of Congress politician and vice president of the party's Mumbai unit Bhushan Patil withdrew his name from the election which will be held on 23 July.

Patil's withdrawal leaves the race between two incumbent officials of the MCA, Vice President Sanjay Naik and Secretary Ajinkya Naik.

The election is being held following the untimely death of MCA president Amol Kale last month in the USA, where he had traveled to watch the T20 World Cup match between India and Pakistan."During monsoons, we don't have such good infrastructure, which can give an outdoor-like feel," Ajinkya told the media here during a press meet."

Ajinkya Naik PHOTO: X / W@AJINKYASNAIK

- Mumbai should have an indoor cricket academy with an "actual turf pitch" MCA secretary Ajinkya Naik, who is fighting the state association's presidential election against Sanjay Naik said on Tuesday.

The vision is that instead of going to other places, in Mumbai's MMR jurisdiction, we will have our academy which will have an outdoor feel.""I have been seeing a lot of facilities in the UK, Australia (and) there is one in Ghansoli.

On the same lines, we should have one where there is actual grass and actual pitch because what we have right now is a turf pitch," he added.Ajinky's name for the post of the president was proposed by former India Women's captain and MCA's Cricket Improvement Committee advisor Diana Edulji as well as a local cricket club official Jitendra Gohil."I have been working here (at MCA) since 2015.

I was a marketing committee member, then I was an apex council member, (and I am) now (the) secretary and standing for the president's election. You keep on upgrading, or it (the role) keeps on changing, but cricket is common," Ajinkya said."

I feel that I'm backing the right horse. Kale and Ajinkya were a very good team as a president and secretary.*—PTI*